
ELOISE DE MONTBLANC.

ELOISE
DE
MONTBLANC.

A
NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

“ Inured to sorrow from her tender years,
“ Her parents’ ashes drank her early tears.”

SAPPHO TO PHAON.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,
AT THE
Minerva-Press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVI.



ELOISE DE MONTBLANC.

CHAP. I.

AT the end of the last chapter I flatter myself I raised the curiosity of my readers, by the letter which was delivered to Eloise, therefore the first thing that I shall do, will be to satisfy it, and without further perambulation produce the curious epistle.

“ *Adorable Eloise,*

“ Little can you conceive the torments of my soul, in consequence of being separated from you: When your presence no longer gladdens my fond heart, I sink into misery and despair. From the first moment I had the honour of seeing you, I have felt that love, that adoration for you, which nothing but death shall ever annihilate. Your superior beauty has enthralled that heart which every woman has sought in vain; and I flatter myself our affection is mutual. Give me leave, then, adorable girl, to throw myself and fortune at your feet; neither of which, I assure you, are reckoned contemptable. For without thee, fair nymph, I may say with the Italian poet, “ *Vivere non possio.*”

“ Haste, then, by answering this epistle, to make me the happiest of men, by knowing I possess the heart of the angelic Miss Montblanc

“ Adieu till I receive your permission; I shall then haste to present myself at your shrine; and by giving your hand, where I
hope

hope and flatter myself your heart has long
been, you will make both happy ; till when

I remain your affectionate

Adoring lover,

FITZERRINGTON."

Eloise read this high-flown and curious
epistle with a mixture of surprise and pain :
For though he was always next her in com-
pany, yet she supposed it was rather to feed
his vanity, than from any real affection he felt
for her. She had no idea that she possessed
charms sufficient to enslave the heart of
Fitzerrington, whose whole attention seemed
to center in dear self.

Had she never seen Augustus, her heart
would have recoiled from him. His pert
forward manners, tempered with so much
d'amour propre, and the flattery he used to-
wards women was so vain and fulsome ; all
of which served to make her detest him,
when she thought of him as a man who wished
she should pass her life with.

No sooner therefore had she read his letter than her resolution was irrevocably fixed, to return answer couched in the most polite and grateful terms, for the honour he did her, but so decisive a refusal as should leave him in no doubt as to her sentiments. She presented it to Lady Castle Fern, who felt much curiosity to read it, as she had observed Eloise change colour several times while she was perusing it.

“ Indeed, Eloise,” said she, returning her the letter, “ ’tis a prodigious great offer ; an only child, with a pretty fortune. Pray, my love, go and tell Sir Lewis ; and let him hear your good fortune from your own mouth.”

“ My good fortune,” said Eloise, with a sigh ; “ then we see it in very different points of view ; for I should consider it as one of the most unfortunate periods of my life in which I gave my hand to Mr. Fitzerrington.”

“ Why surely, my dear Eloise, you mean to accept him.”

“ No, never,” said she, with resolution.

Lady

Lady Castle Fern appeared surprised and disconcerted.

“ Not accept him ; you talk like an unexperienced child ; take the letter to Sir Lewis, and he will soon convince you of the fair prospect you seem at present to despise.

Eloise obeyed in silence. Alas ! thought she, I see new vexation in store for me ; but still for the sake of my mother’s misfortunes, and her last injunctions, I will be positive and firm in my refusal. This reflection brought her to the study. She put the letter into Sir Lewis’s hand, and then retired to her chamber, to indulge the reflections that crowded on her mind.

Alas ! thought she, that I had but my beloved mother, in whom I could confide, and pour my sorrows into her sympathising bosom ; from her sweet counsel I should receive consolation. Oh father of mercies ! that it had been thy will to have spared her to me.

How shall I combat against the arguments of Sir Lewis? how venture to dissent from his opinion? will he not think I refuse him on account of some other person, and that other most likely he will suppose his son.

No, never must I be the wife of Augustus! bred up in poverty and banishment; the hands of my father embued in the blood of an innocent man, a stigma never to be obliterated; friendless, except what the superior goodness of Providence has raised up for me. Must so miserable a creature bear the name of Castle Fern? no, never! yet I call that Being who knows our inmost thoughts to witness, that exclusive of any prior attachment, I would rather submit to laborious work, than be the wife of Fitzerrington.

When she was summoned to dinner, like a thief that is afraid of detection, she crept into the room, expecting to see frowns on the brows of Sir Lewis and his lady. Dinner passed without any remarks on the subject; and

and Lady Castle Fern and Eloise were retiring to the drawing-room, when Sir Lewis told Eloise to remain where she was.

She drew her chair next him, and he thus began :

“ My dear child, what answer do you mean to return to the letter you gave me this morning ?”

She replied in a voice scarcely articulate, “ A refusal, Sir.”

“ A refusal ! what can be the reason of so extraordinary a determination ? A young man of birth, fortune, and accomplishments, even beyond what your most sanguine friends could expect.”

“ Indeed, Sir, I cannot accept Mr. Fitzerrington’s offer ; to give him my hand, while my heart peremptorily refuses to own him as its master, would be an injury to him, and an irreparable one to myself.”

“ But, Eloise, tell me sincerely, is not there some lurking affection for some one

else, that prevents you from accepting Mr. Fitzerrington?"

"No, Sir!" said she, with a resolute voice; "if I had been a beggar, a beggar I would have remained, rather than unite myself to a man my heart recoils from."

"Well, my dear, I agree with you in your opinion of not accepting a man you cannot love; but beware, Eloise, of encouraging hopes that will but end in misery, for they *never* can be realized."

"I assure you, Sir Lewis," said she, taking his hand, "I have no other hopes, but those of still possessing your affection, and being still under your kind protection."

"Then, Eloise, you have your wishes fully satisfied; for a heart of stone could scarcely refuse protection to such innocence as yours."

She then returned to Lady Castle Fern.

When Sir Lewis first read the letter, pleasure beamed in his eyes, from the reflection,
that

hat when she was the wife of Fitzerrington, she would be out of the reach of Augustus; but another instant told him, that if she did marry, it would not be such a man as Fitzerrington. A vain, conceited coxcomb would not be the man that Eloise, with her superior sense and accomplishments, would select to spend her life with; and he again relapsed into his former uneasiness about his son.

His justice spurned the idea of pressing her into a marriage with a man she abhorred; it had the appearance of wanting to rid himself of her to the first person who would take her. Too fond of her for such a wish, he determined to let her act as she pleased, and trust to her natural sense of rectitude, for her not entering into a clandestine engagement with Augustus.

Thus stood affairs now at the chateau.

The next morning Eloise answered the letter, thanking him for the honour he did her, which she did not think herself intitled to; but she did not mean to enter into any engagements, and with the greatest gratitude begged to refuse his offer.

She now flattered herself that she had done with this business, and that Fitzerrington would take it as it was really meant, a dislike to him, or that she did not mean to marry, and that he would find himself too much humbled to solicit her any further; but on the following morning, when she was sitting alone in the parlour, Mr. Fitzerrington was announced.

After some time spent in solicitation, he threw himself on his knees at her feet, and ran on for some time in a strain of adulation too gross to repeat.

“ Sir,” said Eloise, assuming unusual dignity, “ if you have received my letter,
you

must be confident that your conduct is both improper and distressing to me. My determination is resolutely fixt, and all attempts to alter it will be vain."

She now endeavoured to leave the room, but he seized her gown and prevented her. He vowed the world to him, without her, would be a blank—a chaos he could not endure, and entreated her to have pity on him.

Eloise was still inexorable, and seeing a favourable opportunity, when he was in a paroxysm of pretended grief, she rang the bell, and then left the room,

Fitzerrington finding nothing was to be gained, either by force or entreaty, left the house as soon as he had satisfied himself from the mirror, that it was not his charming person she could dislike, and returned home, to tell his mother, who condoled with him on his disappointment.

She now enjoyed tranquility, though not happiness.

Augustus wrote to his mother when he reached Strasbourg. He only mentioned Eloise in general terms, though Wharton desired his particular regards.

Sir Lewis, as the winter approached, although not felt so severely in Montpellier as in England, found his health decline; his cough returned with additional violence, and he was confined to his chamber, sometimes to his bed.

Eloise scarcely ever left him; she read, sung, or played on her harp to him, and endeavoured, by every endearing attention, to amuse him under his sufferings; she made his broths, and prepared every thing he tasted. His temper was softened by sickness, and his austerity abated by the view of death before him.

One morning, when Eloise had left the room, to prepare some medicine he was to take, Sir Lewis called Lady Castle Fern to him, and thus accosted her.

“ I have seen, my dear Maria, with inexpressible sorrow, a growing attachment between Eloise and Augustus ; and though it may excite uneasiness, it cannot excite surprise, that a young woman so beautiful in form and face, and so accomplished, should be almost adored by a young man ; but there is an insurmountable barrier to her ever entering the family of Castle Fern. It is not from any objection to herself, or her want of fortune ; far from it, I even think she would do honour to any situation, however great ; and if Augustus ever does marry, I should wish him to choose the model of Eloise de Montblanc, if there exists another so perfect as herself : So highly accomplished, her understanding so well cultivated, she is all that can charm the eye and please the mind. Superior to the affectation of most young women,

women, without their prudery, but with double their modesty, she will create their envy and malice whenever she is introduced into what is termed the fashionable world, which you will encourage, and ought for the sake of your son, when I am no more, and which will be soon, for this I feel will be the last winter I shall ever be a kindred of this earth.

Then it is that Eloise will excite the admiration of our sex, and the envy of yours. To your kindness it will be to defend her from the arrows of calumny, which are generally directed at all such lovely girls, when they first enter, without fortune, fashionable life.

By your protection she will live in a seeming state of independance, which will defend her from the base attempts of designing young men. And let me entreat you never to let the world know that she relies on your bounty for what she enjoys; for there cannot be a situation so dangerous to a young woman, as to be poor and handsome.

“ But

“ But remember, my adored Maria, you must never accede to a marriage with Augustus; her father a miserable exile from his natal country, his hands polluted with the blood of an innocent man, a stain that even time cannot obliterate: The disgrace that the name of Montblanc carries with it, the obliquy that must ever be affixt to it, are coercive reasons why Eloise must never add one to the expected name of Castle Fern,—a name which, till the rebellion, shone high on the rolls of fame for its great derivation and military honours: Then, alas! it was tarnished. Must, then, Augustus add another disgrace to the family, by marrying a woman whose father was exiled for murder? No! sooner may he meet the tomb, than by marrying Eloise, again stain the name of Castle Fern.

“ Yet, though I have told Augustus he must never think of Eloise, I have forbore to mention why, because it would be of no service; for in his present state of mind, when sanguine youth hovers over his head, he is so
blinded

blinded by love, that I do not doubt he would renounce all his family honours for the sake of possessing Eloise. To have told him therefore of her father's disgrace, would have only been a cruelty towards her, and would not deter him from thinking of her as his wife.

“ Had the name of Montblanc been as fair as before her father's banishment, all my wishes would have centered in the marriage of Eloise and Augustus ; but now they must never think of each other, but as friends ; nor must you ever give your consent to their union ; and I have too firm a reliance on Eloise not to know she will never marry without it.

Her ladyship had a slight touch of the family pride of the Castle Ferns, though not so strongly tinged with it as Sir Lewis. She therefore saw the objections in the same forcible light as he did, and she promised never to sanction their marriage.

The

The return of Eloise to the room ended the conversation ; and when she saw, by his looks, Sir Lewis's agitation, and enquired the reason, little was she conscious how much it related to herself.

Gloomy winter now arrived with her miserable aspect ; the flowers no longer bloomed, the trees were stript of their few remaining leaves, and the tops of the mountains were covered with snow and sheets of ice ; yet in the vallies below the verdure was still fresh and beautiful.

Sir Lewis grew gradually worse ; he was intirely confined to his bed. The gentle and affectionate Eloise sat wholly in his chamber ; she never left him till midnight, and returned the next morning with day-light.

Lady Castle Fern wished not to alarm him of his danger ; yet she thought it necessary he should see his son, and one day she
slightly

slightly hinted she wished he would send for Augustus, but he peremptorily forbid it.

“ If,” said he, “ he could be of any service to me, I would send for him; but, alas! nothing in this world can do me any good; and the sooner I end an existence, rendered miserable by the death of my adored Maria, the better.”

This was the first time Eloise ever had heard Sir Lewis mention his daughter; for neither he nor Lady Castle Fern ever spoke of her. She had once heard Augustus say, he had a sister, who died in a melancholy way at Bristol; but though she wished much to know more about her, she forbore to distress him by enquiries. There was no one else who could inform her; all that the servants knew was, that she died of love for her sweetheart, as they vulgarly termed it; but this was not satisfactory to her, curiosity, which increased by observing the sorrow that always attended her name; for when Augustus mentioned

mentioned her, the tears streamed down his cheeks.

Sir Lewis, by long sickness was less austere, but the bed of pain made him impatient. Eloise, by anticipating his wishes, gave him as little occasion to exercise it as possible.

One morning, e'er the servants were risen, he rung his bell, and as soon as his man attended, he ordered him to go in the post-chaise and four to Avignon, to fetch an attorney who lived there, to settle his affairs. The carriage did not return till the next day, owing to the badness of the road. Sir Lewis was left all day alone with the attorney; and the next morning the carriage took him back with him to Avignon.

The day after he appeared more composed and less impatient than he had been for some time, and Lady Castle Fern was willing to flatter herself he was a little better; but when
he

the physician came, he damped all the hopes she had so fondly conceived, and told her it was only a slight exertion of nature before life was quite extinct, and that his death he feared would happen in a few days.

Eloise's heart was ready to burst at this sad intelligence; she now watched by his side night and day, with the same unremitting care and solicitude she shewed towards her father; in short, she remembered he had been a father to her, and as such she loved him. And she was amply repaid for her anxiety and attention, in the comforting idea, that she had, by her kindness, soothed his last moments, and rendered the pangs of death, which encompassed him in a few days, calm and composed.

As soon as the melancholy epocha of his death happened, Lady Castle Fern and our heroine retired to their separate chambers, to
in-

indulge their misery ; both of them being too unhappy to bear each other's company.

Lady Castle Fern felt severely for his loss ; it had been a match of affection on both sides, and their love had been strengthened by time.

To attempt to give her comfort, by reasoning with her, Eloise knew, by the truest maxim, that of self-experience, that reason has very little to do with sorrow.

She despised what the world calls fortitude ; it argued, as she thought, a want of feeling, she did not wish to possess,—a stoical disposition to bear the death of a relation or friend. In worldly affairs and misfortunes, she thought it highly commendable to endeavour at attaining it ; and that fortitude her mother had practised, exalted her in
her

her opinion ; but she carried not fortitude to the grave, at least, never beyond it.

Yet she admired resolution to overcome grief, and had herself practised it ; but she always found fortitude ascribed to those who, because they have no feeling, bear their misfortunes with the same composure they do the common events of life.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

THE melancholy and disagreeable task of giving orders, and writing letters, devolved on Eloise.

To write to Augustus, from her own feelings, she thought improper, and she therefore addressed a letter to Mr. Wharton, informing him of the melancholy event, and desiring them to meet the corpse at Calais, (for they were still at Strasbourg) as it would be impossible to keep the body till they could return to Languedoc.

In

In a codicil there were orders given by Sir Lewis about his funeral. He desired to be buried in the family vault in Derbyshire ; but the will Lady Castle Fern forbore to have opened till Augustus should return from his melancholy journey.

Five weeks had now elapsed since Sir Lewis's death, and Augustus was not returned ; day after day passed, and he neither came nor wrote. Lady Castle Fern was sensibly alarmed ; while Eloise, ever amiable, endeavoured to dissipate an uneasiness she equally suffered. Sometimes she fancied he was ill ; or worse, that the packet had been lost, crossing from Dover to England. Her self-tormenting imagination furnished her with ample food for misery ; and while she buoyed up her benefactress with hopes that he would soon return, she stood more in need of the consolation she endeavoured so liberally to give.

Lady

Lady Castle Fern now seldom rose till very late; Eloise therefore always took long walks before breakfast, either in the adjacent wood, or the meadows round about the chateau; and Augustus was ever the theme on which her thoughts dwelt.

One morning she arose, after a pleasing dream of his being returned; the day, though cold, was fine, and she strolled into the garden; she was musing on the possibility of Augustus staying in England with some object of his affection, when suddenly her little dog began capering and jumping with joy, and looking up to see what could occasion him so much pleasure, before her stood Augustus.

“How do you do, dearest Eloise? how does my beloved mother do? but you are ill, what have I done!”

He sprang forwards, and caught her in his arms; for with the surprise and joy of seeing

him, she had fainted. Terrified, he knew not what to do, till recollecting the cascade, he carried her thither, and in his hat got some water, with which he bathed her face; and soon she opened her languid eyes. A scarlet blush suffused her cheeks, when she found herself in the arms of Augustus; she made an effort to disengage herself, and then assisted by him, walked to the house. When they drew near the parlour, Eloise entreated Augustus to wait while she went to prepare Lady Castle Fern; for her spirits were in that weak state that the least surprise would overset them.

“How considerate you are,” replied Sir Augustus; “but I sent Wharton on before, to announce my arrival; but tell me, could you conjecture what was become of me? I hope my mother was not uneasy about my absence.”

“Indeed,” answered she, “we were both very uneasy, and feared some accident had befallen you.”

“And

“ And did you, charming Eloise, interest yourself about me ?” said Sir Augustus, with a look that evidently shewed how much he was delighted with the idea. “ Indeed, Eloise, I am too happy in the thought——”

Here they arrived at the parlour, where the meeting between the mother and son was affectionate beyond the power of description: He wept his father on her widowed bosom, whom he tenderly loved, while she mourned the pleasing companion of many a happy year.

As at breakfast Eloise contemplated his manly countenance; she thought she had never seen him look so exquisitely handsome; the sable habiliament were remarkably becoming to him; his fine hair waved negligently over his forehead, and his *toute ensemble* was all that was elegant.

“ My dearest mother,” said Sir Augustus, after breakfast, “ you must have thought me

strangely remiss in not writing to you, and which I hear has occasioned you much uneasiness, though not more, I am confident, than it has me; but you and Eloise shall be the judge of my situation. We were returning from England, and had already arrived at Versailles, without receiving the least molestation from any one; they did not even inquire our business; but here they treated us extremely ill; denied us passports, to continue our route, unless we would acknowledge the tree of liberty as our sovereign, and wear the national ribbon; if we refused, they threatened to put us into confinement; there was no alternative; and with a national cockade in our hat, after acknowledging the tree of liberty and equality, they permitted us to proceed. At Fontainebleau the people were all up in arms; the cap of liberty was hoisted on a pole, and dragged through the street by the fishwomen, while others were employed in breaking the windows and defacing the hunting seat of their unfortunate monarch. They made us get out of our car-

carriage, which they immediately took possession of, to shew us their equality. Here we were obliged to stay four days, before we could procure a conveyance, and when we had with great difficulty procured one, we could not get a person to drive us; for the postillions told us they were all citizens, and on an equality with ourselves. Three days more we spent in fruitless endeavours to procure one, till the morning of the fourth day, when one agreed to drive us, if we would pay him three times more than the usual sum.

“ Every day brought fresh reports of the anarchy and confusion that still raged in Paris, and we were glad to continue our journey on any terms. We arrived that night at Montargis, the capital of the Gatinois Orleanois; the people were crying out for bread and a king. Bread was scarcely to be got on any terms, and without any other refreshment more than a little brandy and water, we continued our route. At Chatillon we were again refused passports,

and there we were obliged to remain two days, till the magistrate was summoned before the Convention, to give an account of himself; and we again escaped. The next night we arrived at Bourges, which was in less commotion than the other places; and as we travelled further all was tranquil, except at Cossel, where we were looked at a little suspiciously; and the people made us change money for assignats; and from thence we have continued our route, without any more alarms; and thus end the travels of Augustus Castle Fern, which (continued he, laughing) if recorded, would tell as well as ever did Bruce's or Gullivers."

Eloise's blood chilled through her veins as she listened to the enormities that were daily committed,—and by women too, whose nature she thought to be so soft, so mild, and so gentle. That they should become so ferocious and cruel, evinced to her the truth of the old adage, that the best thing corrupted becomes the worst.

The

The next morning after breakfast, the Will of Sir Lewis was opened, and Lady Castle Fern, Sir Augustus, Mr. Wharton, and Eloise, were present. To her ladyship was left an annuity charged on the estate, besides her settlement. To Eloise he bequeathed two thousand pound, to Mr. Wharton one, and the residue of his fortune to Augustus.

Eloise's heart overflowed with gratitude for this legacy so generously left; it placed her in a state of independance she never expected to enjoy, at least in a single state, and the thought of a married one, with any one but Augustus, her heart revolted at.

She now observed Mr. Wharton behaved more particularly attentive to her than ever he had done before.

I would not have you, my readers, suppose it was on account of the fortune she had so unexpectedly gotten.

He had ever admired and loved her, and he now found himself, by the goodness of Sir Augustus, who had presented him with a living (the incumbent of which had died shortly after Sir Lewis) in a situation to support a wife.

He well knew she never must be the wife of Augustus, as Sir Lewis had in confidence told him his objections; but far from considering her a disgrace, he thought her worthy the first peer of the realm, from her beauty, virtue, and accomplishments.

Yet his natural timidity prevented him from speaking to Eloise; and he therefore entreated Sir Augustus to plead his cause to her.

“The eloquence of my friend,” said he, “will go farther than my own.”

Sir Augustus, who never suspected Mr. Wharton of the least partiality to Eloise,
was,

that would do honour to the most exalted situation."

Here his voice became so tremulous that Eloise's blushes could only exceed the distress he seemed to labour under. He was some moments silent, and then proceeded, though with visible hesitation.

"I am commissioned by the friend of my heart, and of my earliest recollection, of all my infantine pleasures and pains, and the most amiable man breathing, to paint to you his ardent love, and to solicit your hand. If the man of the strictest honor, of sense, and of innate goodness, can gain your love, Wharton will be first on the list. He professes for you the most refined passion, and a reverence for your virtues that alone can be felt by those who, like us, are acquainted with them. 'Tis your superior beauty that first charmed his eyes, but your merit that has enthralled his heart."

Augustus was now so agitated that he could scarcely articulate a word; but summoning up resolution to go through the arduous task he had undertaken, he performed a merville, considering he was pleading in favor of, as he imagined, his fortunate rival.

Eloise, who at his beginning of the conversation, had flattered herself that it was a declaration of his own love, on which all her future happiness depended, now received such a severe disappointment, that, unable to conceal her feelings, she burst into tears, and sobbed aloud.

“ My dearest Eloise, what have I said to distress you in this manner? for heaven’s sake compose yourself; you’ll make me miserable to see you thus; tell me, how have I vexed you?”

“ Not at all,” replied she; “ but since the death of Sir Lewis my spirits have been uncommonly low; the least thing agitates them;”

was, when he told him, surprised and thunder-struck; he stood musing for some minutes, to consider whether he had sufficient courage to plead in favour of a rival, or whether his friendship and magnanimity ought to be carried to such a height; at length, after some minutes debating between honour and love, friendship triumphed over self interest, and he at once resolved to comply with Wharton's request.

Perhaps, thought he, she wants no pleadings in his favour, and only waits for his addressing her to own her love for him; perhaps she loves him as much as I adore her. Then, let them come together; nor let Eloise suffer from love, what I do from a parent's commands, and I may say, harsh ones; though by his death perhaps they are done away, and his caprice continues not after his decease; but even if they are, I would sooner waste my days in lingering absence from the empress of my heart, than act dishonorably by my friend: I will even persuade her to

accept Wharton; and though she refused Fitzerrington, her objections cannot be the same in regard to Wharton: Nature's child, abhorring affectation, in him every virtue assimilates; while, on the other hand, Fitzerrington is a vain, conceited coxcomb, unworthy the hand of the amiable Eloise.

While these noble resolves were passing in his mind, he strolled into a large wood that led to the town of Maquelone. Before him he espied Eloise; he followed her, and taking hold of her hand, begged her to give him a few minutes attention; and striking into a more intricate part of the wood, to avoid being overheard by the peasants who were passing, Augustus, after an instant's consideration, began.

“Eloise,” said he, “it is a remark, that the passion of love allows of the most eloquent language, and I am going to exercise the force of mine, to gain an interest in that heart
that

Wharton was convinced there was nothing to hope; he knew she was a young woman of too much honor, and that her election, when formed, would never waver from the first object of it; nor would she, for her amusement, sport with the affection of any man. He therefore determined to set off the following week for his living, and in his parochial duties endeavour to forget his love.

While these reflections occupied Mr. Wharton, Eloise had retired to her chamber in all the anguish of despair. She was now fully assured that Augustus felt no other sentiment for her than esteem. His undertaking such a commission for his friend, plainly demonstrated his indifference towards her; for never could he have pleaded so strongly in favor of another, if he felt a tender sentiment himself; and his attentions, she now saw, was the mere effect of gallantry, of which her kind and regretted protector, Sir Lewis, had forewarned her. She therefore now accused her-

self of folly in listening to the soft and tender things Augustus had so often whispered her.

Pride, which generally supports us in all the misfortunes of love, now stepped in to her aid, and sweetened the bitter pill of mortification.

“ At least I flatter myself,” said she, “ I never gave him room to suppose I had more regard for him than was reciprocal. Unstudied indifference is more supportable than either cold contempt, or perhaps humiliating compassion, which would be the result, if he knew my folly and weakness, and for the future I will beware of appearing pleased with his attention. I will not be the dupe of his unmeaning gallantry ; Eloise de Montblanc, though poor and almost friendless, scorns to be the ready flirt of any man.

At dinner she met the disappointed and unhappy Wharton. He endeavoured to
6 behave

them, and the unexpected declaration you have made in favour of your friend, has made me commit a weakness I ought to conquer. If, Sir, (continued she, drying her tears,) you are to be the retailer of my sentiments to Mr. Wharton, you will do me the favor to present my warmest thanks to him for the favorable opinion he entertains of me, and assure him of my utmost gratitude, but my hand I cannot give him; for my intention is at present to remain single; but there is no occasion why, because we cannot meet as lovers, we may not meet as friends; and friendship need not be changed to hatred, which is too often the case; I shall ever feel for Mr. Wharton the highest veneration and esteem; but it can never go beyond that."

"And must I, Eloise, carry such a harsh decision to my friend? may not I soften the decree?"

"If, Sir, you think I have said any thing harsh, you may, when you repeat it, alter it; but still the meaning must be exactly the same."

"Are

“ Are you fixt, Eloise ?”

“ Yes, Sir, irrevocably so.”

They now arrived at the house ; Eloise retired to her chamber, and Augustus to Wharton, to be the messenger of his fiat. He received it with sorrow and despair.

He told Augustus he should go immediately to England ; for never could he bear to live in the house with Eloise : While he saw her, and heard the music of her voice, she wreathed more and more round his heart ; and in the employment of his time in his parish he was resolved to conquer his love ; at least to chasten it with those bounds which would suffer him to behold her without adding poison to his wounds.

Augustus, though he was sorry to lose his companion, applauded his resolution of leaving a place where Eloise was a constant inmate.

Wharton

behave to her as usual ; but he was uncommonly absent ; his eyes were fixt with despair on her face, which from modesty was suffused with blushes which vermillion could scarcely equal.

The following week he was to set off. The night previous to his departure, he approached Eloise, and took her hand. " Will Miss Montblanc, as she is an early riser, render me happy, by making breakfast for me before I set off ? "

" Certainly, with the greatest pleasure, " replied Eloise.

The next morning she arose before her usual hour, and when she descended to the parlour she found it empty ; but soon after Mr. Wharton made his appearance.

" Dearest Miss Montblanc, " said he, " though I shall never enjoy the felicity of calling you mine, since the fates have decreed it otherwise ; yet, whether married or single,

single, may you enjoy every blessing. Above the coquetry of most women, your answer contained so much candor, that I have nothing to hope from time or persuasion. But while in time, I must fly from your dangerous presence. Most charming of women, may you never meet a disappointment in the darling wish of your heart."

She with a tremulous voice thanked him in the most kind and grateful terms; and Sir Augustus entering the room, put an end to the conversation. He looked first at one, and then at the other, as if to learn from their countenances what they had been talking about.

Breakfast was soon brought in; it passed almost in silence; and soon after the chaise drew up to the door.

Eloise extended her hand, in token of friendship, which the dejected Wharton saluted;

saluted; then taking a last look at her, he sprang into the carriage, and Augustus accompanied him on part of his journey.

The day passed in melancholy retrospections to Eloise; when she thought that Augustus had no particular love beyond friendship for her, it was a dagger to her heart; but she persisted in her resolution of behaving towards him with that reserve and circumspection as should give him no room to suppose esteem was more than mutual.

The next night, when she retired to her room, Bridget accosted her in the following terms.

“ Lord, Miss Eloise, who do you think is married ?”

“ I am sure, Bridget, I don’t know.”

“ You would not guess, if you were to try a thousand years.”

“ Then,”

“ Then,” replied Eloise, “ I need not endeavour ; since I shall not live a quarter of the time.”

“ Why, lord, Miss, do you guess once.”

Eloise, whose ideas were never on any thing but Augustus, softly pronounced his name.

Bridget, who possessed all the flippancy of a waiting maid, replied, “ La ! no Miss, I believe your head runs on nothing but Sir Augustus. I am sure I should be very sorry if he was married to any body except one person, and that I hope we shall all live to see. Well, to be sure, never was I so surprised as when I was told of it. It used to be formerly, “ Love me little and love me long ;” but now it is the fashion to love one much at first,—make a great fuss about never recovering their crosses in love,—and then marry in a few weeks, as that sweet scented Sir, Mr. Fitzerrington has done. A fine new chaise, something like a chronicle, I assure

sure you he has got. I saw him drive by our pateraro this morning with his spouse. Lord how he looked all around, in hopes of shewing you all his finery, and his wife with her painted cheeks."

"And pray, Bridget, who is he married to?"

"Why, lord, Miss, I had like to have forgot to tell you that. 'Tis to the eldest Miss Crofts; though if I had been her I would not have taken up with any ones cast off sweethearts; and they say he has got only one eye; but then, to be sure, she would most likely not have been married at all; for she is not so very young, and they say she wears falsities."

After interlarding her tale with annotations and reflections of her own, Mrs. Bridget took her leave, highly pleased to have been the first to communicate the intelligence to Eloise.

The

The next day Sir Augustus came back; and as Lady Castle Fern wished to return to England in a month, it was agreed they should leave the fertile province of Languedoc.

The next morning, when they were taking an airing in the carriage, they were overtaken by a smart open chaise, resembling a curricule, in which was a pair of very spirited horses, and on looking up, they perceived it was Mr. Fitzerrington with his *cara sposa*. Upon seeing Eloise, he drew in the reins, and began whipping the horses, in order to shew his good jockeyship; but the mettlesome beasts were not in a humour to be tampered with; and after kicking and prancing for some time they at length overturned carriage, and laid Mr. Fitzerrington and his bride on the ground.

Sir Augustus, ever ready to render any service in his power, particularly when females were in danger, immediately stooped the

the coach, and jump't out, and in a few minutes returned, leading in Mrs. Fitzerrington, who was unhurt, but her dress so perfectly *dérangé*, that she was scarcely to be known. In the fall she had unfortunately lost a pair of mouse tail eye brows, which she flattered herself were equal to nature.

Fitzerrington followed soon after, and the party moved homewards.

“ My God ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Fitzerrington, “ what have you done to your eye, it is quite horrid to look at ? ”

“ 'Pan my honour I don't know ; but I will look in my pocket glass ; for I suppose my dress is quite discomposed.”

He then consulted his mirror, and sad to tell, he had lost an eye, for he wore a glass one. His confusion is barely to be conceived when he found out his misfortune. He had however the effrontry to pretend his
eye

eye was only very much hurt ; and he bound up his face in his pocket handkerchief. When like one-eyed Vulcan he arrived at his house ; and after thanking Sir Augustus for his attention to himself and his lady, with his vanity sufficiently mortified by his fall, he wished them a good morning.

Eloise could but smile at the catastrophe, that most likely would not have happened, but from Mr. Fitzerrington's folly. If his intention had been to mortify her, he was himself sufficiently humbled for his presumption, without effecting his purpose. And his sweet simpering affected lady, by appearing so fond of him, and so happy, endeavoured to excite her envy, but that was equally unsuccessful : We never feel envy but at superiority, and Mrs. Fitzerrington was as much inferior to Eloise in personal and mental beauties, as her husband was to Sir Augustus.

The

The time now drew near when they were to return to England ; their journey would be both tedious and expensive, as the commotions that shook the interior part of France rendered it dangerous to venture through the direct road. Lady Castle Fern's fear of venturing on the sea prevented them from going in that way which would have been most eligible ; but Sir Augustus ceased to press it when he found how disagreeable it was to her. They therefore determined to travel as close to the frontiers as possible.

In the meantime Eloise had behaved with the utmost politeness and good humour to Augustus, but with that reserve which by not being natural is generally overacted.

Augustus, who was so delighted when she refused Wharton, because he then thought he heart disengaged ; and open to himself, now perceived Eloise's behaviour to him with inexpressible sorrow, while the jaundice-eyed monster whispered him that it

was not improbable some favoured youth of Italy had possession of her virgin heart, and therefore with a warmth of temper which was almost the only fault in his nature, he in silence accused her of coquetry. But had he considered her dispassionately, he would have seen her behaviour was, and ever had been far from the character so inimical to her perfection of mind; but he was now completely hoodwinked by love and jealousy.

“ Alas !” exclaimed he, “ sure it is some favoured lover in Italy claims her affection; perhaps while she possesses my whole heart, she has no return of hers to make : Like mine, her love has been pirated from her before she was aware of it. But then Augustus, art thou not criminal in endeavouring or wishing to gain what is the primitive right of another ? No, sooner let the earth open and receive me, than try to rob some mortal happier than myself of the affections of such a mistress, while she perhaps in absence mourns her distant lover.”

Augustus

Augustus was on these reflections more than ever convinced that some prior attachment prevented her returning his regard. The two good offers she had refused (particularly the last from so amiable a man) fully evinced she had given her heart ere she knew him.

The coolness now was therefore mutual; they seldom spoke to each other, except in general terms; and while Eloise avoided Sir Augustus, he was studiously endeavouring to do the same. It was too apparent for Lady Castle Fern not to observe it; but it gave her pleasure rather than uneasiness, since she knew that Eloise never could be the wife of her son.

The self-tormenting Eloise now teased herself with the supposition, that he would return to England, and there render some woman happy, by soliciting the hand of her (oh mournful thought!) who perhaps had long possessed his heart.

No longer the cheerful Eloise ; her cheeks no longer glowing with the rose ; her vermillion lips almost changed to white ; her once brilliant eyes now no longer animated, but spoke the silent and passive language of despair.

Sir Augustus could not behold the alteration without feeling, almost to madness ; he saw her suffering for the absence of some beloved object, or possibly endeavouring to subdue a flame which he was certain could end but with her existence. Yet he could but pity her, when he remembered she was soon to quit her native country, and possibly be taken far from her lover for ever.

Little did he dream she was endeavouring to overcome the most pure and sincere passion for him. With what joy would he have flown on the wings of love from his country, his friends, and his fortune, and in a desert have passed his life with his Eloise.

The

The lock of hair he possessed, he cherished with adoration; twenty times in a day would he look at it with despair, press it to his distracted breast, and then return it to its place, with a sigh that would almost have melted a heart of adamant.

No longer the exact, the elegant Augustus; his brows were crowded with frowns inspired by disappointment and sorrow; his hair was dishevelled; his dress never altered after the morning, which was then inattentively put on, and evinced his ideas were on far distant subjects from his person.

A long dull month thus passed away, and the time, within a day, was come when Lady Castle Fern and Sir Augustus were to return to their native shores, and Eloise was to quit hers for ever.

The word *ever*, as it vibrated on her ear, seemed to bring something with it shocking.

To-morrow I leave Montpellier for *ever*,—
never shall I again see the sweet village of
Riffone,—*never* shall I again behold yon
spire of the convent appearing between the
trees.

She was summoned to attend Lady Castle
Fern, who was going to take leave of Mrs.
and Miss Melvin. Eloise was sorry to part
from her young friend; but they agreed to
correspond often; and Mrs. Melvin pro-
posed, as soon as the winter was over, to return
to England.

Instead of returning with Lady Castle
Fern and Sir Augustus, Eloise walked to-
wards Riffone, to take a last farewell look at
the cottage.

“How often,” said she, as she approach-
ed it, “have I endeavoured to divert my
revered mother’s melancholy, by the soft
chords

chords of my lute ; how often have I, while unthinking and unthought of, celebrated a fine evening with a lively tune from my harp ; then without care, contentment gilded all my hours, and eternally played around me."

Her heart sickened at the retrospection of past happiness, now bartered for misery ; and she walked from the cottage with sensations too acute to be described ; she turned once more to look at it ; the garden, the arbour, all served to remind her of some pleasing circumstance so different to the present.

She next went to take a last look at her mother's tomb ; it was a plain white stone, on which was written only her name, age, and the date of her death.

Eloise burst into tears when she saw at what an early period her beloved parent

D 4

died

died—not from age or sickness, but worn out with a course of unremitting sorrow, being only thirty-seven.

“ Alas !” sighed she, “ had I known her woes, I would have endeavoured to sooth them ; and I trust my attentions would not have been vain. How happy should I have been in spending in obscurity a life dedicated to an only parent,—far—far from the busy world ; in endeavouring to render her happy I should have been so myself ; but that power whom we all fear and acknowledge, acts always for the best.”

Then dropping the tear of filial affection on the hallow'd earth of Louise de Montblanc, with melancholy steps she bent her way towards the chateau, and arrived just before even closed.

Augustus saw by her tell tale eyes she had been weeping. How did he wish to give her

her comfort,—with what joy would he have been condemned to the severest punishment, to see her happy: But he inherited some sparks of that pride both his father and mother possessed; and he spurned the idea of offering his consolation where he feared his pride would receive a wound by a refusal.

CHAP. III.

ELOISE retired early to her room, but not to her bed. She employed herself in packing up her wardrobe and the few trinkets she possessed. She took out her mother's picture; 'twas a most serene and lovely countenance, unclouded by misfortune; but so pleasingly pensive, that it seemed almost to speak comfort as she gazed on it. At length, worn out with fatigue, she threw herself on her bed, and in the pleasing arms of Somnus for a while committed her cares to oblivion.

The

The darting rays of Sol had just hailed the ruddy morn, and peeping his majestic head into the chambers of the drowsy peasants, summoned them to their wonted labour, when Eloise, after a few hours tranquil sleep, awoke and equipt herself in her travelling dress.

“ This is the last morning,” said she, “ I shall *ever* awake in Montpellier ; to-day, for the last time, I shall pass by the dear cottage at Riffone. Ah, blest abode ! how much joy and how much misery have I experienced there.”

She now knelt down and petitioned the Lord of the Universe, to inspire her with resolution to support and conquer her sorrows ; and then composing her agitated spirits, she descended to the breakfast parlour.

Sir Augustus was there alone, and as if fearing to trust himself near her, he left the room. Eloise could scarcely bear this severe

mortification, but hearing her benefactress on the stairs, she concealed her agitation. Lady Castle Fern entered the room, accompanied by her son. As soon as the usual salutations of the morning were over, they sat down to breakfast, which passed almost in silence. Eloise's heart was too full to permit her to eat, and she sat a mournful spectator, not an actor in the meal. Natural tenderness at length overcame the reserve of Augustus.

"You have lost your appetite, Eloise," said he, in a mournful tone; "will you give me leave to hand you something."

She shook her head, for her heart was too full for utterance; and Sir Augustus again leaned back in his chair in the same non-challance as before.

The carriage that was to convey them far from the fertile plains of Languedoc, at length arrived. It seemed the moment of execution

execution to the distracted Eloise, who almost shrieked with horror.

Lady Castle Fern endeavoured to soothe her, and at last prevailed on her to get into the carriage, followed by herself, Sir Augustus, and Mrs. Bridget, who was in a riding habit and a black hat and feathers, (for Mrs. Bridget's weak side was her person.) The other maids followed with Sir Augustus's valet, in post-chaises, and the grooms were mounted on horseback.

Eloise threw herself back in the carriage, and covered her face with her handkerchief. Lady Castle Fern sat endeavouring to give her consolation; while Sir Augustus, with his hat over his eyes, dropt the manly tear of sorrow for the situation of his adored companion, who, though she wished it, dared not trust herself with a look from the window.

At this moment the bell of the convent greeted her ear, as if reproaching her for not
taking

taking a last survey of its peaceful walls ; its white turrets met her eyes as she opened them, and between the limes and mountain oak trees she beheld the cottage at Riffone. Tears again dimmed her sight, and ere she could compose herself sufficiently to encounter the view of it again, it was out of sight. Every inch of ground for some time served as a remembrance of some pleasure or pain till the quick turning wheels bore them beyond the precincts of an airing or a ride on horseback, which was the only time she was ever further than Montpellier, except when with Mrs. Melvin she was at Avignon ; but that was the contrary road.

The beauty of the surrounding country awakened her attention and called forth her admiration. The mountains over which she passed in Guienne, so tremendously beautiful, could not fail to lay aside for a while her melancholy, and give way to surprise and astonishment.

The

The once blest country in that province still breathed the harmonious sounds of peace and contentment; the rude and desolating hand of war had not then spread its dire contagion in that part of the country; nor had oppression and slavery blazoned on her bulwarks under the deceitful and deluding appellations of liberty and equality.

They passed through the province of Poitou, which still remained unshaken by discord and oppression; nor did they find any difficulty in proceeding till they arrived in Bretagne, where part of the French army were stationed at Pont-chateau; and provisions of every sort were scarce and expensive, particularly bread.

The English were travelling in numbers from the interior part of the kingdom, while innumerable French of both sexes were emigrating to England.

The

The soldiers were most of them riotous and disorderly, and the greatest part of them young lads. The surrounding peasants were in a state of requisition; the mother's clinging to their sons, and beseeching them not to forsake them, presented a scene too horrid to relate; and those whom filial duty or love led to refuse to become soldiers in so bad a cause, suffered under the guillotine, which serving as an advanced party, was carried in the front of the regiments.

The magistrates interrogated Lady Castle Fern and her companions, to know from whence they came, and whither they were going. Augustus told them they were returning to England from Montpellier in Languedoc.

At first they denied them passports; and Lady Castle Fern, who had all the timidity of age, gave herself up for lost on the denial, and so agitated was she by fear and fatigue of mind, that, if they had procured them, she
was

was so unwell as to be incapable of proceeding.

No physician was to be procured, for they were all with the army; and Eloise and Bridget were her only attendants. Eloise watched her with the tender solicitude of a daughter; she never left her chamber nor lay down for two nights but in her clothes; while the suffering and wretched Augustus was condemned to a little room in the miserable inn, where he spent his time with no other companion than his melancholy reflections, which he indulged to the utmost, without endeavouring to repel them.

In a few days Lady Castle Fern was sufficiently recovered to travel, and by a bribe Augustus procured passports to the next town.

At Mesac minute inquiries were made of them, if they had seen the regiment, and what place it was then quartered at. They answered

swered in the affirmative; and they then permitted them to proceed. On account of the numbers that were travelling, horses were difficult to be procured, and they were compelled to travel very slow. In a few days they arrived at Cherbourg; where they intended to hire a vessel to take them to Portsmouth. The commerce being entirely ended between the countries, no vessels were going thither, nor would they for some time provide one to take them. Augustus seeing how much his mother was alarmed at the idea of staying the night there, spent his time in searching for a boat. At length some fishermen promised to take them for a large sum, in one that belonged to them.

They were obliged to embark in the evening, and lay all night close under the shore. Two beds were all that the little vessel contained; Lady Castle Fern occupied one, and Eloise part of the night gave hers up to Bridget. As soon as the welcome day light beamed in the horizon they put to sea.

sea. The wind was quite fair, but the surge ran immensely high, inasmuch that the deck was covered with water, and the cabin so extremely small and disagreeable, that except Lady Castle Fern, they all preferred being on the deck, though their legs were half way in water.

Eloise sat silently musing on the different tenor of her mind, at the present and the last time she was on the briny waves, when she had vainly flattered herself she possessed the affection of Augustus.

The French fleet, which was then near the channel, obliged them for safety to sail more to westward, and day-light again declined ere they had reached their destined port. The night was perfectly serene and calm; the moon was in the meridian of her splendor, and reflected her silvery beams on the undulating bosom of the wave; while millions of stars shone conspicuously bright in the celestial world. All was still as death,
except

except now and then the rude song of the sailors, or the melancholy tone of the pilot when he sounded the lead. The fanning breezes wafted them with moderate swiftness; and about four o'clock they were on the happy shores of fair Albion, and within a few hours more in the harbour at Portsmouth.

“ Thank God,” said Lady Castle Fern, “ I am once more on old English ground,— once more I behold my native country, the real land of protection and happiness.”

They proceeded to an inn, and after some refreshment, they all retired to rest.

As they were extremely fatigued, alike in mind as in body, they purposed remaining two or three days at Portsmouth, to recover themselves.

On the second day Lady Castle Fern wished to indulge Eloise with a view of the fleet then moored at Spithead; and Augustus
went

went previously to visit an old school-fellow, who had a house a few miles from them in the country; his name was Bycroft, who was a captain of a man of war; he was extremely pleased to renew his acquaintance with Sir Augustus, and wished him to go on board his ship; but he excused himself on account of his having promised his mother to conduct her to see the town and the fleet.

When Captain Bycroft heard that his mother and her friend were at Portsmouth, he insisted on Sir Augustus fetching them to dinner, where in his sea phrases he assured them they would meet a hearty welcome, and a large party of ladies and gentlemen.

Lady Castle Fern, who declined all amusements, on the account of the recent loss she had sustained, begged to be excused; but her son pressed it so strenuously, and since she was no longer afraid of the sea, after the dangers she had been exposed to in coming from
Cherbourg,

Cherbourg, that, accompanied by the lovely Eloise, she went.

The sight of a fleet was entirely new to Eloise, and never before had she seen any thing so grand in appearance: she thought that with an armament so large and so well disciplined, that Britons must be conquerors throughout the world.

The Captain sent off his cutter to the shore, to fetch them on board. It was a cold day in March; the wind murmured with a hollow noise, and its whistling seemed congenial with the perturbed bosom of our heroine. Her beautiful colour, which by fretting and sorrow she had nearly lost, with the keenness of the easterly gale, acquired a glow which gave her the appearance of perfect health; and in the meridian of her happiness and beauty she had scarcely ever looked handsomer than she did when she entered the Formidable man of war.

The jealous eyes of Sir Augustus in an instant perceived his friend was the stricken deer ; he saw that he never ceased looking at her, and seemed to catch her very words with transport as they fell from her lips.

Eloise felt none of those inconveniences that most foreigners meet with in England, in not being able to speak the language ; this she did extremely well, from the early instructions of her mother, and likewise her kind benefactor Sir Lewis ; yet with an accent so pleasing and fascinating as rendered double the charms of her harmonious voice. The gentlemen particularly admired her manner of conversing ; the construction of her mouth was so beautiful, and her teeth so white that they rendered her additionally interesting when she spoke.

There were several ladies and gentlemen ; the former seemed to be setting their caps at the gallant Captain ; they therefore saw Eloise's superior beauty with an envious aspect.

aspect. Such a hand and arm as she drew from her glove, when she sat down to dinner, might have excited the admiration and envy of any one ; and her dress too was so simple and elegant, while the other ladies were equipt to the utmost stretch of indelicate fashion.

They all laid out the common and stale wiles of lisping in a soft accent, simpering, &c. but, alas ! to no purpose ; Captain Bycroft's attentions were otherwise engaged ; but on their hearing the name of Augustus was prefaced with a Sir, they considered it most politic to lay seige to the titled beau. He returned their attacks with politeness ; but, alas ! he had no heart to make them a present of ; his was gone for ever, and the vacuum was supplied with a substance so hard that nothing could wound it.

The dinner was in the utmost style of elegant profusion ; the wines were the most costly and choice, and liquors there were of every denomination.

Lady

Lady Castle Fern, as being superior to any of the other ladies in rank, was seated at the top of the table, while Eloise modestly took a place near the bottom; Augustus sat next her, not to gratify himself, but to prevent others from being gratified; for he took no notice of her, except once, to give her an expressive look of despair.

Captain Bycroft, as soon as he got an opportunity, asked her to drink wine with him.

She answered with such a bewitching smile, that Augustus could have plunged a dagger into his breast for receiving it; he was even so jealous as to wish she looked less handsome, and that her usual pallidness, instead of that animated glow, had covered her face. Loving her to distraction, almost frantic with jealousy, to chase away reflection, he plied the bottle very fast, and before the desert was removed he was entirely tipsy.

After tea Captain Bycroft opened a piano forte, and begged some of the ladies to try it.

Many of them played and sung in a cursory manner, at last Eloise was solicited; but she wished to refuse. Lady Castle Fern, who was vain of her protégée's voice and taste, entreated her to comply. She never wanted much pressing; she considered to persist in a refusal, and afterwards comply, was only with a wish to heighten the idea of her performance, and to enhance the favour; she therefore sat down with the greatest good humour.

She asked Lady Castle Fern which she should sing, English or Italian; for she sung some English songs, which Augustus had brought from England for her.

Italian, was echoed from every one; and she sung with her usual sweetness.

The

The gentlemen were quite in ecstacies, and the ladies pretended to be delighted.

“ To be sure,” said Captain Bycroft, addressing himself to Sir Augustus, “ the English are good hearty folks ; John Bull is as sincere a fellow as ever lived, and the wooden walls of old England give protection to all nations ; yet it must be confessed, that for the finer arts and sciences France and Italy beat us hollow. What a happy fellow you are, to have been there.”

“ For arts,” replied he, darting an expressive look at Eloise, “ they *are* our superiors ; yet I do not consider myself fortunate in having been there ; in short, I wish I had never been in France.”

“ Why, keel haul me if I don’t wish I had been in your place ; if you had but let me have known, I would have asked the old dons of the admiralty leave of absence, and then in the twinkling of an eye have been on the sod at Montpellier.”

" I wish then you had," said Augustus.

" I suspect," answered Captain Bycroft, rather archly, " that the hoodwinked deity has been failing his arrows a longside of you."

" I don't know who has failed near me ; but this I know, that I have been hoodwinked too long."

" Love is always blind," replied Bycroft ironically ; " it sees nothing but the shoals of jealousy."

" Then I would advise you to steer clear of love, or possibly you may run on quicksands you don't like."

" Oh, I have often been to leeward that way ; but have always got off without any damage ; for I always steer clear of engagements with the enemy."

Here this repartee was interrupted by some one asking Eloise if she sung the duet of *Pace mia cara sposa*.

She answered she did.

" Then,"

"Then," said Captain Bycroft, "I'll take the bass, and accompany you on the violin."

They then began the duet; it was beyond any idea delightful; Captain Bycroft sung extremely well; and the contrast of her soft voice and his manly one formed the truest harmony.

While they were singing, Augustus was on the torturing rack of jealousy; he entreated his mother to return to the inn, under the pretence, that the water at such an hour would be detrimental to her health.

Lady Castle Fern, who seemed, now she was on British ground, as if returned to a dear friend, some sweet partner of her youth, and who possessed the power of renovating, and who was likewise delighted with the singing and playing, wished to stay longer; but an entreaty from her son always overcame her own desires, and she arose to go.

Upon taking leaving Sir Augustus told Captain Bycroft, he hoped soon to see him in the country.

“ Oh, yes; you’ll see me long before that; I shall be at your breakfast table to-morrow morning.”

“ To breakfast,” replied Augustus, stammering; “ I—b—lieve—I have an engagement at that hour.”

“ N’importe, I will sail into the harbour without you for a pilot; and if the ladies will receive me sans ceremonie, I will wait on them at their breakfast hour.”

“ I will endeavour,” replied Augustus, “ if possible, to put off my engagement (knowing at the same time he had not any;) but he dreaded his friend’s seeing any more of so lovely a creature as Eloise.

The night was very cold, and there was an awning over the boat; but Augustus declined sitting under it, but took his place at the helm, and steered them to the shore.

The

The next morning, at an early hour, the gallant Captain was announced; and he brought with him a gentleman of the name of Mapleton.

“ Damme ! Augustus, boy, how are you this morning ? Il pensieroso still. I have brought our old school fellow, Jack Mapleton ; I knew I might insure him a hearty welcome.”

“ Certainly,” said Augustus, taking him by the hand ; “ I am always happy to see the friends of my youth.”

Soon after their arrival Eloise entered the room, looking even more interesting than she did the night before. The singularity of her dress, and the elegance and softness of her manners universally excited admiration. And Mapleton confessed to himself the effect of her charms, while Bycroft acknowledged her the sole empress of his heart.

After breakfast the two visitors proposed a walk to the dock-yard and other curiosities, with which the town is replete. Our heroine, with Lady Castle Fern, were attended by the gentleman; and after viewing every thing that was worth seeing, the gentlemen took their leave.

Captain Bycroft had been drinking of the poisonous draught of love, while Mapleton was practising forbearance, which was the preliminary on which the Captain promised to introduce him,—that he was not to rival him with Miss Montblanc.

In the afternoon the carriages were ordered, and they left Portsmouth for London, where they arrived the next night, and took up their abode at the hotel in Vere-street, for a few days, till Lady Castle Fern could administer to Sir Lewis's Will.

London,

London at this season was entirely full, and Eloise was charmed with the variety of the scenes, and amused herself with looking from the window; among a group of carriages that were passing she descried Fitzerrington in his curicle; she withdrew immediately from the window, and was not seen either by him or his lady.

She was surprised to see them in England; for she did not know they were coming; but the retirement they lived in at Montpellier, prevented them from hearing the anecdotes of the neighbourhood.

The next morning Lady Castle Fern and Sir Augustus went to Doctor's Commons, to administer to the testament. She made an apology for leaving Eloise, but begged her to have the servant to attend her, and with Bridget to take a walk.

No sooner was the carriage driven with Lady Castle Fern from the door, than the ever ready Abigail, who paid great attention to her personal charms, bedizened herself in a fine Padua silk poloneise gown and a beaver hat, with a plume militaire; her cheeks she had rouged with a colour that approached almost to brickdust; and thus equipped she sallied forth with Eloise, attended by the French valet.

As our heroine knew nothing of London, it was perfectly indifferent to her in which part of it she walked. Not so Mrs. Bridget; she thought, after being so long on the continent, it would not be amiss to walk where there was most probability of her shewing her improved person, and therefore selected Bond-street for her promenade; and, as my readers may imagine, they were the universal objects of vulgar gaze.

They had not walked long before they espied Mr. and Mrs. Fitzerrington, who
took

took out their glasses, through which they stared at Eloise, and pretended not to recollect her; but that had not the desired effect, as it gave her pleasure rather than uneasiness.

As they were returning Eloise thought she heard some one mention her name, and on looking round, saw Mr. Mapleton, who approached her, and inquired after Sir Augustus and Lady Castle Fern.

Mrs. Bridget then filed off to the servant, and Eloise walked with Mr. Mapleton till they arrived at the hotel. He wished her good morning just as Lady Castle Fern's carriage drove to the door, but not till the keen sighted Augustus had seen him.

Too proud to ask her with whom she was walking, he continued in teasing suspense till Eloise, on recounting to Lady Castle Fern the adventures of the morning, mentioned her walk with Mr. Mapleton.

“ Mr. Mapleton ! is he in town, my dear ? ”

“ He came yesterday on particular business, and returns to-morrow. ”

Augustus was now satisfied ; and he wished for nothing so much as getting into the country, where she would not be seen by so many young men.

Nothing occurred more that day worth relating, and the next morning early they set off for Sir Augustus's seat in Derbyshire. They went by the way of Oxford, as Sir Augustus wished to see the University. They slept two nights on the road, and the third within the friendly walls of Besborough Castle.

The Castle, as I before said, was in Derbyshire ; it was situated upon eminence, and commanded a fine prospect of the most cultivated land, and romantic hills and caverns. The Castle had withstood for many years the
hands

hands of time, though it now seemed bowing implicitly before it ; yet though past its grand climacteric, (if so I may be permitted to call it) a century, it had still a title to magnificence, beauty, and grandeur.

It was a spacious square edifice, with turrets at the corners, which reared their heads above the other part of the building, and was the only part that was to be seen from the road, for the oaks which were alike its supporters and protectors, from the rude northern blasts, defended the front of it from the common gaze.

The leading to the Castle was from a winding chalk road, which since feudal times had been cut by the ancestors of the present possessor.

The front faced the North, where the wind blew so bleak and cold, that the house-keepers offices, the great hall, and staircase, were all that were on that side the building.

In

In hostile ages there had been a fosse all around it, but it was now filled up partly with the mouldering fragments of the west end of the Castle, and partly with large pieces of stone, with which the caverns in that country abound.

In former times, when the feuds of the barons were settled by their vassals' strength and numbers, the great Castle Fern, Earl of Kintmore, had bravely defended his Castle, with only a hundred men, while the superior force of the enemy amounted to two hundred and fifty. The ramparts and fortifications were most of them demolished; but the Castle withstood a heavy firing from them, and not a stone of it was removed.

The rooms that were occupied by the family, were on the south and west side.

To the south there was a portico, which was supported by bullestrades of, and paved with marble. It projected in the centre,
and

and formed a semicircle ; over the portico was a picture gallery, in which there was a large bow window, not in panes of glass, but in small compartments, formed in all manner of flowers ; at the tops of the windows were coloured glass, representing the arms, crest, and cypher of its possessors since its building. The portico was bounded by a long wide terrafs, and beneath it was a park, which was well stocked with deer.

The eastern side was fronted by a large hanging wood, which in ancient times was a secret reception of robbers, who in bands infested that part of the country, though now the peaceful habitation of the feathered creation, who with their melody charmed the inhabitants of the Castle. The western front was open to a shrubbery of the most beautiful trees that could be conceived or collected ; and beyond was a hill almost perpendicular ; while below the eye was fascinated by the most fertile vallies and small hills,

hills, with rivulets, that can be imagined to render a prospect delightful.

As Eloise surveyed the Castle, she thought to herself, how happy, how blest, must the woman be, who, as the wife of Augustus, was the mistress of it. This thought led her into a train of melancholy ideas, when she remembered she should never inhabit it, but as the unhappy Eloise; and perhaps, sighed she, not that long; for if Sir Augustus marries, the same day that brings home his bride, witnesses my departure from England for ever.

While these reflections were passing in her mind, she wandered among the lofty oaks, till at length she arrived at the lodge, where, tempted by a blazing wood fire, and a reverend bow from old Anthony the porter, she entered to warm herself.

“ Welcome you, my lady, to Besborough Castle; why, ’tis quite gladdening to see it
in-

inhabited again; why, 'tis nigh upon two years since there was any one in it but the old housekeeper; it rejoices my old eyes to see my blessed lady and her noble son returned; why, now, my lady, sixty summers have passed over this bald head, and yet I never knew them away for so long a time. Poor old Anthony thought it would end in death; which, to be sure, is the finishing of us all, as the saying is. Going to your outlandish places in search of health. Now, if master, blebs his honour! had but staid at home, and only had Doctor James, the pothecary in the village below, why, rest his soul, he'd a been as hearty as that sapling there, that I planted with my own hands; but, as the text says, we must all die once; and my turn will come next; I thought when I saw my poor master's hearse at the gate, it was a warming for me to prepare. I have already seen three coffins go through the gate: First, there was my Lady's, then there was my young lady's, poor thing, that *was* a sad sight, so young, and so pretty, 'twould have

have made your heart ach to have seen the white feathers on the hearse, and the horses' heads, as she went to the vault to be buried; to be sure his honour was so main bad, I thought he never would come home in his right senses; and her dying was all along with going to your French foreigners. And then going to these places only makes people proud. Now, here's our Bridget; why, lord, I remember her a little bit of a ragged girl, about the street, with hardly a shoe or stocking to her foot, and all by my lady's bounty she is become what she is; why, and now, since she has been to live in your outlandish places, she wont hardly speak to me. Last night, when I went into the servants'-hall, to welcome her, why, she looked at one as if one wasn't flesh and blood like herself; and there she sat conversing with the French valet in your foreign tongues. I dare say her betters won't treat me in that way. There's my lady, as sure as God made little apples, she'll visit the lodge to-day, and inquire as freely after my wife and children

children as if they were her equals. There's Sir Augustus, no more pride in him than in my shoe, lord blefs him! I remembers him a little boy, and as sweet a tempered little gentleman as ever God gave breath to. There's that there young fir-tree he helped me to plant; there he was with his spade, which was almost more than he could carry, digging till he could hardly stand; yet, blefs him! still he would stay till the job was done; never shall I see his like again; and there a'nt a house in the village that can't bear witness to some good action of his. Why, once, do you know, Sir Lewis had given him a couple of guineas pocket money before he went to school; so he went into the village, to buy him a bat and ball; and there was an ox belonging to a butcher was overdrove, and died raving mad, and so the butcher was in great trouble, and thought he must be ruined, when Master Augustus saw him, and gave him every farthing of his money; why, Lord love him! the king could not have done more."

Anthony

Anthony still kept chattering on, and Eloise would have listened till noon, without considering what time it was, while he talked in a manner so congenial to her ideas; for her heart beat in unison with Anthony's in the praises of Augustus.

“ Well, to be sure, this is a blessed day, to see them once more returned before I die; and now, if Sir Augustus was but married to some person as good and as handsome as himself, I should lay me down in peace.”

“ As he said this he walked to the door, and hobbling back; “ Now 'tis as true a saying as ever was made, that “ Speak of the devil his imps will appear;” not that I mean to say Sir Augustus is a devil, God defend me from such wickedness! but here he comes full tilt up to the lodge.”

Sir Augustus now entered, and after shaking his old servant cordially by the hand,
with

with a formal bow told Eloise breakfast waited for her.

Anthony again began. "Why, I have been telling this here lady, what a good little gentleman you was, when you helped me to plant that fir tree; and now, as I have been saying, nothing now remains to be done, but to take yourself a spouse, and I hope I shall soon see the day." At the same time looking first at Eloise and then at Augustus.

Eloise blushed deep as scarlet, was extremely distressed, and knew not what to do, but rising in haste, she wished Anthony a good morning, and returned to the Castle. Sir Augustus followed at a little distance, but avoided getting up with her, till they arrived at the breakfast parlour.

Lady Castle Fern asked Eloise how she liked the old Castle.

"I

“ I have only seen the outside of it,” replied she, “ except my chamber and dressing-room, which, though extremely good, I should suppose must form a very inconsiderable part of this magnificent building.”

“ If you please, after breakfast, we will look over it, and then you will see the extent of it.”

She thanked her for her kindness, and after breakfast, accompanied by Lady Castle Fern, she prepared to go, while Sir Augustus went to view the grounds.

The hall was built with a lofty dome at top ; the windows only afforded light, not any prospect ; for they were so high, that it was impossible to see from them. It was paved with black and white marble, in small squares ; all around were busts of its possessors, some of which were clad in armour, and others in the dress of the times in which they flourished. The great stair-case led from the hall, and was likewise of marble ; along

the side of it were niches, in which were busts of some part of the family, or curiosities in petrefaction, which from time to time had been presented by the tenantry to the lords of the domain. The dome which reached over the stair-case, was painted to represent the heathen deities. The stairs were terminated by an anti-chamber, which led to the great gallery, and which was over the portico. On one side of it were the pictures of the ladies for five or six generations, and which might rival the king's beauties at Windsor. And on the other were those of the gentleman, at the top of the gallery Eloise discovered the picture of Augustus in a hunting dress.

“Do you know that likeness?” said Lady Castle Fern.

“Yes,” replied she, with a deep sigh, which in vain she endeavoured to hide.

“Why that sigh, my dearest Eloise? I really suspect you are unhappy; you are not half so gay as you used to be.”

“In-

“ Indeed, madam, I am not unhappy,” said she, while her blushes testified the falsehood she was guilty of.

Lady Castle Fern feared entering into an explanation, and therefore dropt the conversation.

The gallery at one end opened with a pair of folding doors, into a suite of rooms superbly furnished, though in the taste of 1650. The chairs in the great drawing-room were of red velvet, trimmed with gold fringe; the curtains were the same; the arras was of tapestry; the glasses were superb, and the light in the centre of the room was of burnished gold.

They went through several of the same kind, though not so large. At length they arrived at one furnished in a more modern style. Eloise entered it alone; and soon found, by the music books, her library, and her picture, that it must have been Miss
Castle

Miss Castle Fern's room ; she stooped to gaze at the picture ; it was a full length, and represented a beautiful girl about sixteen, with blue laughing eyes, rosy cheeks and coral lips. She turned from it with tears in her eyes, when she recollected at what an early period of life she met the grave, a prey to love.

Lady Castle Fern had forbore to enter the room, for she had in vain endeavoured to summon courage ; for since her daughter's death, the melancholy circumstance of it, whenever she attempted it, rushed so forcibly on her mind, that it rendered her a coward.

" What, Eloise," said she, when she returned to her, " do you think of the picture over the chimney ?"

" It has, I think," replied she, " a beautiful face, seems to speak all that is amiable."

“ She was indeed amiable,” said Lady Castle Fern, in an agony of tears. “ Oh Eloise ! may you never know her woes ; she died a prey to grief, at the age of eighteen. At present my spirits are extremely low ; but soon, I hope, I shall acquire resolution to tell you the melancholy events by which she met so early a tomb.”

They then returned through the rooms which they had passed, and coming again into the hall, Lady Castle Fern led her up another stair-case, much narrower than the other.

Lady Castle Fern drew from her pocket a key, with which she opened a door into an anti-chamber ; they passed through it, and came to a superb bed-chamber, hung with purple velvet, with a silver fringe.— The furniture of the bed was the same, and every part of the room bespoke grandeur and magnificence, though it tacitly acknowledged the destroying tooth of time ; for the curtains
were

were almost dropt to pieces, and moths had eaten the bed almost away.

“ Here it is confidently reported,” said Lady Castle Fern, “ that the beauteous Mary Queen of Scots slept, in her way to Buxton from Tuthbury Castle, in her last illness, attended by her keeper, Lord Shrewsbury ; yet though since that time the Castle has so often been repaired, that scarce one of the first stones remain ; yet this chamber is said to be the much honoured one, and though not the smallest vestige of the ancient furniture remains ; yet this, though a second, or even third imitation of the original, has always been held sacred by the possessors of Besborough ; and but for your inspection it has not been opened for several years.

Our heroine was delighted with the elegance and loveliness of the room, and with Lady Castle Fern was still admiring the tattered and moth-eaten furniture, when on a sudden they heard a most violent shrieking,

which seemed to be in the room. Impelled by fear, Lady Castle Fern ran away as fast as she could; and Eloise wished to do the same, but as the former was from her age rather slow, Eloise, who was behind her, feared every instant she should be seized by some demon.

They stopt when they had attained the head of the stair-case, for they were then within hearing of the servants.

“ Let us return, and see what it can be,” said Lady Castle Fern; “ for to alarm the servants would be ridiculous; and to remain in doubt and error will be terrible.”

Eloise dreaded going, but forbore to express her fears, and once more they entered the chamber. All was still, not the least noise was to be heard. They looked under the bed, in the closets, and in the different
places

places of the room, but nothing was to be seen.

" 'Tis strange and extraordinary," said Lady Castle Fern.

" Strange and extraordinary, indeed," echoed Eloise.

They looked again under the bed, and were again expressing their surprise and conjecture, when a noise more violent than the first assailed their ears.

Lady Castle Fern turned pale; Eloise trembled with fear and astonishment; and a spectator would have thought them the ghosts instead of the ghost hunters.

Eloise, who knew Lady Castle Fern's heavy and slow tread, with her usual agility ran away, as fast as she could, leaving her benefactress to do the same, though at the distance of about ten yards. When they again arrived at the top of the stairs, they sat

down to compose their scattered senses, and it was some minutes before they could speak, so agitated were both of them. The dinner bell then rung, and they arose to obey the summons.

“ But I must not leave the key in the door,” said Lady Castle Fern; “ the servants will probably go in from curiosity, and if they hear the noise, will spread it abroad that the Castle is haunted. Eloise, my dear, will you go and lock the door, for I am quite out of breath with running.”

She did not know what to do ; ashamed to refuse, yet fearing to go, she stood some minutes irresolute ; at last, summoning to her aid her superior good sense and courage, she went through the suite of apartments, and soon arrived at the door of the chamber.

She stopt to listen ; no noise was heard ; she turned the key, and withdrew it from the door, when, accompanied by a crush, as if
part

part of the building had fallen, the shrieking was repeated, and which sent her back, her feet scarcely touching the ground.

“ Oh le diable is in the room, I believe,” said she, trembling, and out of breath with running. She then told her last alarm to Lady Castle Fern, who thought it extremely odd, but desired her not to mention it before the servants, well knowing on every occasion how much they incline to the marvellous.

They then went down to dinner, with countenances that bore testimony to their alarm.

“ Has any thing happened to distress you ?” said Augustus to his mother, as soon as they were seated, at the same time looking at Eloise.

“ Nothing,” replied she, with a significant nod, and which he understood, as he immediately changed the conversation.

As soon as the table was cleared, and the servants left the room, Lady Castle Fern told him the alarm they had had.

"I think, my dear madam, your timidity must have multiplied the noise; the creaking of a door, from hinges long rusty, or something of the same trivial nature, your affrighted imagination conjured into shrieks.

"But then it would not have been repeated; and when Eloise went to fetch the key the noise even increased."

"'Tis very extraordinary," said Augustus, "Unaccountably so. I know you have too much good sense to admit that there are supernatural noises, or I should think you had been terrified by the idea of ghosts; however to-morrow I will investigate the matter, and I hope you will have no more shrieks in the Scottish queen's bed-chamber."

After this conversation Augustus became as silent and as reserved as usual. Lady
Castle

Castle Fern took up a book, and Eloise amused herself with her dulcet harp.

In the evening there was a confused noise of ringing of bells and rustic music, which upon inquiry they found was to hail the return of the family to the Castle.

Augustus went out to thank them, and to reward them for their trouble; and Eloise endeavoured to sooth her benefactress; but with the circumstances of the morning Lady Castle Fern, who was not quite recovered from the indisposition she suffered from in France, was so agitated and unwell, that she wished to retire early to bed.

She laughingly asked Eloise to do the honours of the supper table. She hesitated, but at length answered, she would, if she desired it.

Her benefactress, after going to the study, to wish her son good night, retired to her chamber.

No sooner did Augustus hear that Eloise was left alone, then politeness or love, which it is not my business to determine, induced him to return to the room. He drew his chair on the opposite side to which she was sitting. She still continued running over the chords of her harp in preludes, till supper was spread; and she then took the top of the table, and Augustus seated himself at the bottom.

“ Alas !” sighed he, “ if Eloise loved me only half as much as I adore her, how blest should I deem myself. How would my proud heart exult in such a mistress at the head of my table; how amply gratified, my most sanguine wishes would be, in seeing her, as Lady Castle Fern, receive the prizes due to her virtue and beauty. But, ah fatal day when I first drank so deep of love ! ’twas cruel to wound me without giving a cure ;
but

but possibly she is unconscious of her unkindness."

While those reflections were passing in Sir Augustus's mind, Eloise took a biscuit and a little wine and water. She asked him if she should send him any of the dish before her. A simple No was the answer, and the table then was cleared.

The tongue-tied deity, Harpocrates, now held his rigid reign, as is frequently the case when people cannot with propriety speak of the subject next their heart.

Augustus continued silent and even melancholy; and Eloise sat the same, revolving his behaviour in her mind. At one time she thought of asking if she had offended him; but it seemed like calling his attention, which appeared dormant, into action; and this her pride revolted at. If, thought she, I was Sir Augustus Castle Fern, and he, like me, the dependant Eloise, then indeed

would I inquire if *I* had offended; but relying on the bounty of others for my support, without a sixpence but what the goodness and generosity of Sir Lewis left me, Eloise has little more than her pride to support her, and that the pride of doing right; at least, if ever I erred, 'twas from ignorance, not from intention.

While she was musing Augustus broke the silence; he paced the room, snufft the candles; played with a wine glass, and at last, "Eloise," said he, "the events of the morning seem to have depressed your spirits."

"No, Sir, they have not; the fear was only momentary, and on calm consideration I am confident the noise could not be any thing to fear."

"I dare say not; but indeed, Eloise, you appear unwell."

"Dear, Sir Augustus, me appear unwell."

"Tell me, Eloise, is that dear Augustus meant as any thing more than dear me, or
dear

dear heart, or some such expletive; not a particular mark of your affection?"

She blushed. "You know, Sir Augustus, that any one who bears the name of Castle Fern must ever claim my affection, and be dear to me while gratitude warms my heart."

Augustus sighed; this answer did not please him.

"Oh woman!" said he to himself, "thou subtle disputant, thou dear deluder! but oh more deceitful than the crocodile, thy words are formed of nothing but equivocation!"

Conversation again flagged; he threw himself back in his chair, his arms folded, his eyes cast down, and sat with as much inanity as a king log.

Eloise seeing he was not likely to again converse, from the side board fetched her night candle. He started. "By heaven! she

she must be mine. No, no! the cruel words of a father have decreed it otherwise,—she never, never can.”

She went up to him with a sweet smile, and wished him goodnight.

“ Goodnight, Eloise,” said he, putting out his hand to take hold of hers, which he respectfully kissed.

She then retired to her room, and taking a chair, sat herself down by the window, to meditate on the words of Augustus.

From his extraordinary behaviour towards her, she was inclined to accuse him of cruelty. If, (which she could not doubt from the few words he uttered when he started up,) his affections and his hand were engaged, it was ungenerous, not to say criminal, to sport with her feelings, her health, and her happiness; and this he assuredly did. She was no longer the merry, the lovely Eloise; for love

“ preyed on her damask cheek,” and mirth had given way to sadness in her bosom. Yet, alas! exclaimed she, I have one consoling reflection in all my sorrows, that I never gave him room to suppose I had more regard for him than what was prompted by gratitude for the favours I received from his family.

She sat some time musing in this kind of way, till her spirits were in such an agitation, that she knew to sleep was impossible; and as the moon shone with unusual brightness, she found herself more inclined to walk than to go to bed. She therefore put on a shawl, and stole softly down the back stairs, and gently opening the door, as silently shut it after her. The moon shone with her silvery beams on the prospect, and seemed to reflect a partial day; while the stillness of the scene around, joined to sadness of thought, reminded her of eternity.

She walked near the room where they had been so terrified in the morning; she
looked

looked up at the window ; nothing was discernable but the moon beams playing on the painted glass, and which reflected the colours on the wall. She passed on ; the pensive prospect of the wintry trees seemed in unison with her feeling, and the gentle whistling of the wind, through a few evergreens, appeared like her to be murmuring in plaintive strains. She wandered to the north front of the Castle. Here it was bleak and cold ; the wintry blast whispered through the turrets, and the tall oaks

“ Waved high, and murmured to the hollow wind.”



She returned to the west front, and again looked up at the room where unfortunate Mary of Scotland had slept. A sigh echoed from her bosom when she recollected the melancholy fate of that lovely woman, which, though a fate brought on by herself, claims our pity when we think on her extreme youth and inexperience.

Eloise

Eloise continued walking up and down in melancholy contemplation ; the drowsy hour of midnight vibrated from the clock that was in the centre of the south front of the Castle ; she started ; 'twas momentary ; and she again sunk into a reverie.

She continued pacing up and down ; at last she thought she heard a rustling among the leaves ; she feared to look round, lest she should see something horrible, though she knew not what ; at length summoning courage, she turned her head towards the evergreens from whence the rustling seemed to proceed, and saw a figure cloathed in white glide along. Terrified beyond description, she endeavoured to gain the door that led from the portico. The figure pursued her, and in her fright she past the door. What were her sensations at that moment ; self-defence, the first law of nature, seemed to her in flight, and with steps light as Gossamere she kept running on.

The

The moon, who before befriended her, now, as if offended at her flight, withdrew behind a cloud; it was very near dark; Eloise turned her head; it was not so obscure but that she could just discern the figure followed close behind; she screamed for help; it was only answered by an echo; and overcome with the fatigue of running and agitation, just as the arm or the figure, which her fears had made gigantic, was stretched out to take hold of her, she fell lifeless on the grass.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

PEOPLE actuated by the same sensations, the same hopes, the same fears, in short, congenial souls, have the same pursuits; the magnet of attraction draws them all to one point; and whether it be to their pleasure or pain, it is not my mission to disclose; my task is simply to relate facts as they occurred, and leave the readers to make such comments as they think fit.

It happened then on the night when Eloise left her chamber for a walk in the shrubbery,

shrubbery, there to murmur her complaint to the moon, and to waft her sighs through the dulcet air, that Augustus, impelled by the same motives of uneasiness, retired to his dressing room, and after putting on a long white dressing-gown, strolled on to the terrace.

Eloise, the constant theme on which his thoughts were employed, had that evening, from the langour on her countenance, occasioned by the fright of the morning, appeared to him more interesting than ever, and he was uttering a soliloquy to the whistling winds, when on a sudden he thought he heard a soft murmuring sound. The extraordinary fright his mother and Eloise had met with in the morning, now occurred to him ; he looked up at the chamber windows ; nothing was to be seen save the trembling shadow of a light on the wall, that was reflected from some other part of the Castle ; he therefore concluded it must have been the noise of the
wind

wind gathering in the battlements, and he again reverted to his melancholy meditations.

Again the murmur of complaint smote his ear ; he rushed from behind the trees, where he had been walking, and perceived at some distance a figure gliding up and down, and which on seeing him ran away with great swiftness.

The first surmise he formed was, that it was some person who had secreted themselves in the chamber where Lady Castle Fern and Eloise had been so terrified, and that they had now made their escape ; but deliberation told him, that any person in that situation would not be slowly walking up and down in sight of the Castle, while the sheltering wood, or a friendly cavern would have afforded them so much better protection ; determined therefore to satisfy his doubts and curiosity, he pursued the figure, which he after some time saw fall.

The

The compassionate moon again made her appearance just in time for Sir Augustus to see that he had been in pursuit of his adored Eloise, and that she was now to all appearance dead. He took hold of her hand; it was cold as ice, with a death-like dew on it.

Nearly annihilated, his faculties for a moment suspended by terror and anxiety, he stood for some minutes in an agony not to be described; but returning recollection whispered him she would die, if she remained where she was, and seizing her in his arms, he bore her to the hall, still without motion, and fearing every instant; that life, like a coward, would forsake its post.

As soon as she entered the hall, he seized the bell that summoned the inhabitants alike to feasting and prayer, and rang it furiously, screaming at the same time, fire, murder, thieves.

In

In a few minutes the servants came pouring in from all quarters, begging to know what was the matter.

“Matter!” echoed Sir Augustus, “why I have murdered Eloise.”

A hollow groan was all the answer they made.

Could a Hogarth have surveyed the motley group of domestics, he would have found sufficient food for his ludicrous pencil.

With Mrs. Bridget, I have before observed, dress was always the predominant thought; nor did the idea forsake her even when she was alarmed with the cry of fire, murder, and thieves, though she was not so correct as she would have been, if the balmy god had of his own accord taken his departure, instead of being wrested by force from
her

her circling embrace ; however, in a *bonné de nuit*, which, to imitate the French fashion, was set at the back of her head, over a handkerchief that met her eye-brows, she had stuck on her beaver hat *beplumé*. Her pink padua silk *polonoise* was the first thing she found, and with which she covered herself from the vulgar gaze of admiration, as she flattered herself.

The butler, who not from the incentive of dress, but of dressing himself, had in his fright seized on the coverlid that was on his bed, and self-preservation bid him remember the poker ; and thus armed *cap-à-pée*, he presented himself in the hall.

The other servants, who were not so much terrified, probably from being more able to defend themselves, were dressed with moderate correctness.

The fitting spirit of Eloise might have wandered a pensive melancholy ghost to the
eternal

shades, for the assistance they gave. All of them stood staring, groaning, and shivering with cold from the marble pavement of the hall.

At length Lady Castle Fern's bell rang violently, and Bridget, accompanied by one of the housemaids, for she was afraid to venture along the galleries alone after dark, obeying the summons soon returned with remedies usually administered, such as hartshorn, salts, &c. and now all were as busy as they had before been idle and dilatory.

After some time Eloise opened her languid eyes. Augustus endeavoured to make her sensible of what had happened to her, though without effect. At length seeming to consider an instant, she exclaimed, "I remember the ghost?"

Had the whole fraternity, from the visionary court of Pluto, made their appearance, the alarm and terror they were in could

not be exceeded. "A ghost!" echoed they all with one voice, at the same time huddling into the corner of the room. "No wonder she should be frightened when she saw a ghost."

At this instant a thundering noise was heard at the hall door, which made its massy bars tremble.

The servants screaming, all retired to the other extremity of the hall from which the knocking proceeded.

The knocking was repeated more violently than before, and something like a voice was heard. They now fancied the ghost was come in *propria personæ*, and with terror they kept a profound silence.

"Open the door," said Sir Augustus peremptorily.

None

None of them obeyed; they all stood rivetted to the spot.

“What! are you all cowards?” said he, darting an angry look among them; “and must I be compelled to open the door?” He then removed the massy bars that defended it, and threw open the doors.

Shall I, my fair readers, tell you what this noise was that made all the domestics, even from Mrs. Bridget to the scullion, and the butler to the groom, groan with terror and dismay, that made Eloise tremble, and even the courageous Sir Augustus turn pale; shall I, (I again ask,) inform you what this phænomenon was? or will you think it beneath your dignity to hear? but I hate concealments, and would rather wound your pride and discernment than my conscience.

Know then that it was no other than old Anthony, the porter, who came to inquire what had happened at the Castle, that the

G 2

bell

bell rang so violently, and to offer the assistance of his crab-stick.

Certain it is that he was of great consequence, for he made as much commotion in the hall of Sir Augustus Castle Fern as ministers of state do in the cabinet.

Eloise being now nearly recovered, was assisted by Mrs. Bridget to her chamber, and was soon under the influence of Somnus, who sent his oracle Morpheus, to whisper to her things not totally unpleasant.

The servants adjourned to their respective beds, though fear and agitation had taken away from the balmy influence of sleep.

Sir Augustus, who had been more terrified and agitated with fear than the rest, found himself quite unable to sleep, and therefore threw himself on the bed in his clothes.

The

The next morning, when Eloise arose, she dreaded the idea of descending to the breakfast room. She feared the scrutinizing eye of Lady Castle Fern being levelled at her, to inquire the events of the preceding night. What reason could she give for walking at that late hour? She did not dare own the truth; yet she rose superior to telling a falsehood. Bridget came to tell her breakfast waited for her; and with fear and trembling she entered the room, where sat Lady Castle Fern and Sir Augustus.

He arose and approached her, inquired how she found herself after her alarm, and apologized for being the occasion of it.

"I believe, Sir," replied she, "it was mutual; we equally terrified each other."

"I can deny the test," said Sir Augustus; "there is nothing terrifying in Eloise, unless——" and he was going to say, "it is that obdurate heart;" but while the words were hanging on his lips something like pride

whispered him to forbear; he therefore only received the modest blush that overspread the countenance of our heroine, and then drew his chair to the breakfast table.

She did the same, and sat musing and melancholy expecting every instant Lady Castle Fern would begin; at last the dreaded moment arrived.

"Eloise," said she, smiling, "how well you acquitted yourself of the important task I left you to perform last night; instead of sitting at the head of the table, you went, I understand, to celebrate the moon."

"Indeed, madam," replied she, "I did the honours of the supper table before I went."

"Then, did you quarrel with your company, that you left them so soon? or did your company quarrel with you (glancing a look at Augustus;) be that as it may, I think the adventures of the evening would furnish food for a pretty romance."

"Un

“ Unintentional adventures, on my part, I am sure,” replied the distressed Eloise; “ and which for the future shall never be brought on by my folly.”

Lady Castle Fern wished to turn it off in the ludicrous, rather than making it serious, as that would only tend to an explanation which would but end in misery to both, and which she wished to defer as long as possible, though she saw it would in time arrive; she now however perceived Eloise was really distressed by her rally, and she ended the conversation with observing, that she hoped no more monsters in white gowns would alarm her.

As soon as breakfast was over Eloise retired to her room, and after putting on her hat and cloak, walked down to the lodge, to make an apology to poor old Anthony, for disturbing him in the night.

“ Good morrow, lady,” said he, bowing down to the ground ; “ I hope you are recovered from the fright you met with last night.”

Eloise thanked him for his inquiries, and told him she was tolerably well.

She had not sat many minutes before Sir Augustus entered the lodge.

“ How do you do, Anthony,” said he, “ after the consternation and terror I threw you into last night, owing to my folly and mistake?” at the same time glancing at Eloise.

“ Main well, thank God, Sir Augustus, for all blessings ; to be sure, though you did make a bit of a mistake——”

Anthony’s age and long services gave him privilege to talk, and Sir Augustus very seldom checked his volubility.

“ Ah,

“ Ah, Sir,” continued he, “ just as me and my Betty used to be forty years back ; always at cross purposes ; if she went to the right, I went to the left ; if she passed out, I was sure to follow her.”

Eloise bit her lips, played with her gloves, and looked silly ; she wished to make her escape from the lodge, but Anthony stood between her and the door, and it was impossible to pass.

“ And then,” continued he, “ there used to be such sighing and whispering, and fine sayings, just fit for young folks to talk about.”

“ Pray, Anthony, how long have you inhabited the lodge ?” said Eloise, reddening with vexation.

“ How long have I lived here ? why, let me see, ’tis twenty years—and—stop—why, bless my heart, ’tis forty years since I first came ; and prosper your honour (turning to Sir Augustus) I hope I shall finish my days

here ; after I have seen some folks come together, then indeed I shall lay my old head down contented. Lord welcome your wedding day, then even old Anthony will hobble a dance. These old legs which have not beat time to the taber and pipe these twenty years, will then be as nimble as twenty-one."

Here Anthony began skipping and jumping to the music of his own shrill voice ; and Eloise seeing a fair opportunity, hastened out of the lodge.

" Why, 'tis as pretty a creature as ever God created ; so modest and good natured ; I hope your honour 'll long be happy, and have, as the saying is, the olive branches round about thy table."

" Anthony," said Augustus, " I am not now displeased, because you did not know it was disagreeable to me ; but as you value my favour you must never again mention Miss Montblanc in that way before me."

Anthony

Anthony seemed disappointed ; for he was already fond of Eloise, and thought her the only person worthy his master ; and he settled it in his own mind, that he must be fond of her ; but why he should be offended at being told so, he could not conceive, unless that great folks take queer whimsies into their heads.

“ I am not angry with you,” said Sir Augustus, seeing he looked sorrowful.

“ I hope not, your honour ; for sooner should my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, than give offence to any of the noble family.”

Sir Augustus then wished him a good morning, and returned to the Castle.

CHAP. VIII.

THREE days had now elapsed since they had inhabited the quiet and peaceful walls of Besborough.

The clarion of fame had, with its inventive breath, blown through the village, and like a snow-ball which increases every turn, so did report, through every mouth sport the common-place talk with additions and corrections, till at length it differed so widely from the first story as to have scarcely any analogy to it.

As

As soon as it was heard that the family were returned to Besborough, and with them a young lady, what knowledge fame was deficient in she filled up the machinations of her own fertile brain.

The first report was, that Eloise was an heiress of large fortune, and on the eve of marriage with Sir Augustus. Then that gave way to another, which was, that she was a no body knew who, whom Lady Castle Fern had taken out of the street, and provided for. And the last and most prevalent account, was, that she was already the wife of Sir Augustus Castle Fern.

The vicar of the parish, who was a compleat male gossip, though a good man, listened with pleasure to the various reports as they circulated; and after canvassing them over in his mind, agreed that they were certainly married, and that therefore it behoved him to set the bells a ringing, and likewise

to

to offer his congratulations in person at the Castle.

The village apothecary was of the same opinion, and it was not therefore marvellous that their two palfreys should meet as they journeyed up the chalky hill. After the usual ceremonies of inquiries after each other's health, they chimed in about the purposes of their embassy, and at length agreed it was the same.

They arrived just as Sir Augustus was retired to his study, and Lady Castle Fern with Eloise to the work room.

The right reverend divine was shewn into the study, while the disciple of Asculapius was ushered into the ladies.

Sir Augustus was heartily glad to see his old friend Mr. Edmonds, and after a cordial shake by the hand, they entered into conversation.

“ Give

“ Give me leave, Sir,” said the vicar, “ to wish you joy, and receive my most fervant wishes for your happiness.”

Augustus, who thought it was on his accession to the title and return to Besborough, answered his congratulation with a bow.

“ You were willing, I see, there should not be heirs wanting to the title ; though I think it was hardly fair to make your election in a foreign country ; surely, Sir Augustus, you might in our celebrated shire have selected a jewel as estimable as those in France.”

Sir Augustus stared with astonishment ; he could not unravel his friend's conversation ; and he was just going to solicit an explanation, when in came Eloise, to ask for a book for Lady Castle Fern. He gave it her with the appearance of the utmost sang froid ; and she then retired.

“ If

“ If any thing can palliate,” said Mr. Edmonds, “ your forgetfulness of the belles of Besborough, it is that lovely face ; she is really a divine creature.

Augustus sighed ; ’twas the sigh of mournful and painful recollection that that divine treasure his friend was now praising, and his heart adoring, never, never could be his.

“ Why, Sir Augustus, I declare you blush ; now I have seen a lady colour up, because she was told her husband was handsome ; but I never before saw a gentleman blush because his wife was said to be a beautiful woman.”

Sir Augustus started, for the mention of Eloise had sent him into a train of melancholy ideas.

“ Who, Sir,” said he, vacantly staring, “ did you say was handsome.”

“ Lady

"Lady Castle Fern, to be sure," replied the vicar.

"I think," answered Augustus, "she is altered by sorrow and misfortune, or else she certainly had a claim as a pretty woman."

"Why, I did observe (smiling significantly) she looked a little pale."

"Have you seen her then since her return?"

"I fancy, Sir Augustus, you have lately drank of the waters of Lethe; did she not enter the room just now?"

"Oh! you have been talking of Miss Montblanc."

"Her name might be Montblanc; but I suppose she bears hours, now you have married her."

"Me married!" said Augustus, starting up; "not me, I assure you, my good friend; I am still a single man, and likely to remain so."

"Oh," replied the vicar, smiling, "if you wish it to remain a secret, it shall never transpire from me, I assure you, Sir."

"Where

“ Where there is nothing to conceal,” replied Sir Augustus, “ there needs no secrecy ; and as I am not a Benedict, nor likely to become one, I beg you to controvert the report wherever you hear it.”

An *eclaircissement* now took place, and the divine was not a little pleased to find there was still a chance of the wedding dinner ; for of all things he admired the good things of the table.

Meantime the apothecary, after inquiring after the health of the family, approached Eloise. “ Permit me, dear madam, this honour,” giving her a salute, with his upper lip bedaubed with snuff.

Eloise looked amazed ; but took her honours meekly ; since she supposed it was the fashion of *les ancien Anglais*.

Mr.

Mr. James then inquired after Sir Augustus.

I saw him when he was in England last time, and I wished to overtake him, to inquire after Castle Fern; but 'twas set a cow to catch a hare; he walked so fast that he was out of sight in an instant."

He then continued by offering his congratulations.

"I think," observed Lady Castle Fern, with unusual gravity, "it is a time more fit for condolences than congratulations."

"True, my lady, it certainly is; but when a man takes unto himself a wife, you know one always wishes him joy."

"Sir Augustus has no wife," said Lady Castle Fern, with surprise and vexation.

"No wife! ods curse old Harry's a ram," replied Mr. James, "if I did not think the lady I had just now the honor to salute, was
young

young Lady Castle Fern. Well, to be sure, this will teach me never to listen to the old gossips."

And after making use of a number of quaint terms, and obsolete sayings (for he headed not Lord Chesterfield's doctrine) he took his leave.

It was now too late for Sir Augustus to explore the extraordinary noise in the chamber, and in a short time the sonorous metal announced the hour of dinner.

Sir Augustus was extremely vexed that the report of his being married should gain ground, but he flattered himself it was unknown to Eloise, while she hoped that the talkative apothecary was the only person that had heard of it; however it occasioned a blush between them whenever their expressive eyes met; and soon after dinner Eloise retired, overwhelmed with confusion.

The

The evening passed in a game of piquet between Lady Castle Fern and Sir Augustus, while Eloise amused herself, or at least destroyed time, by playing on her harp.

Sir Augustus gave his attention as much as it was possible to the game; but "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." His eyes wandered to her lovely hand, his ears to the soft sound of her harp; and after losing several games, he begged to be excused from playing any more, protesting he had entirely forgot the game.

The next morning he demanded of Lady Castle Fern the key of the chamber that once contained the lovely, though unfortunate Mary of Scotland, and arming himself with a sword, he proceeded unseen by any of the servants to the apartment. He applied the key;

"Slow creaking turns the door with jealous care."

All

All was tranquil within ; he scarcely trusted himself to breathe, lest he should miss hearing any little noise that might lead to a discovery. All was still and silent as the chamber of the dead, save the ticking of a little insect vulgarly termed a death watch, and which infested the old wood of the bed. He searched behind the arras, the closets, and the beds, but nothing was to be seen. He sat himself down in the window for near a quarter of an hour ; all was equally quiet ; and at length, really believing his mother and Eloise had heard a noise that existed only in their imaginations, or possibly something on the outside of the Castle, he retired from the chamber, and then returned the key to Lady Castle Fern, who still persisted in having heard a noise.

Sir Augustus, though convinced it was nothing but the invention of their agitated minds, promised to explore the chamber at some future time.

The next morning, when Lady Castle Fern and Eloise had retired to the work-room, "I have been, Eloise," said the former, "endeavouring to acquire resolution to tell you the history of my deceased child; her miseries in a short time brought her to an early tomb, and hastened the death of her beloved father, and, in short, the domestic happiness that before reigned in the family, was very much shook, and for some time annihilated."

Eloise replied, however great might be her desire to learn the history of Miss Castle Fern; yet she begged her benefactress not to tell it her, if she thought it would give her pain in the relation.

"Indeed, my dear, I am never so happy as when I talk of her, and therefore I hope your delicate scruples no longer exist.

"Maria lived till the age of seventeen, without any material circumstance happening, and was at that time one of the most lovely and accomplished girls this country
pro-

produced, and was beloved and admired by all who knew her.

“ At this time an aunt of Sir Lewis’s, who was going to Pecquencourt in Flanders, for the purpose of securing an estate, that belonged to her, when the revolution began in 1789, entreated him to spare his daughter, to accompany her, saying, at the same time, she would, if the request was granted, leave her her fortune.

“ Blinded by sordid and interested motives for our beloved child, we in one unfortunate moment gave our consent, though she entreated us to permit her to remain at home, observing, while she lived happy at the Castle, she wished not for riches.

Mrs. Castle Fern was now in her seventy-fifth year, and we hoped and flattered ourselves Maria would soon return to us, blest with a large fortune.

“ The day at last arrived, on which she was to depart. Nothing could equal the agony she appeared in; she entreated us to permit her to remain at the Castle; but, alas!

we

we were inexorable. She then petitioned to put off her going till the next day ; but the die was cast, and she tore herself from us.

We heard from her when she arrived at Dover, informing us they had arrived safe there, and were then going on board the packet for Dunkirk.

When they got to Pecquencourt we again heard from her, informing us Mrs. Castle Fern's business was likely to detain them some time, she took a small ready furnished house, instead of remaining at the hotel.

Her age and infirmity prevented her from walking, and the carriage roads were in that country remarkably bad and heavy for English carriages ; she therefore almost confined herself to the house.

Our beloved child found it extremely dull, and though in the letters she wrote to us, she endeavoured to appear cheerful, yet throughout they breathed an air of melancholy easy to be detected ; she informed us she spent her time chiefly in rambling in a forest adjacent to the house, and accompanied by a

book, passed her time in a kind of negative way. Her heart still hovered round the regretted Castle, and her eyes were turned towards the liquid road that divides France from the fair cliffs of Albion.

Often in her walks she met the young men of the college at Douay; but as they never took the liberty of speaking to her, or noticing her, she continued her rambles uninterrupted.

One morning, when she had risen earlier than usual, and was taking her walk in the forest; a young man passed and bowed to her; she never remembered having seen him before; but her heart acknowledged itself pleased with the attention, and she returned the salute with a courtesy; the gentleman then passed on, and she returned home to breakfast; all day she was lost in conjecture about the elegant stranger, and imprudently resolved to walk in the same place the next morning.

At the usual hour she went; the gentleman was already there, and after some minutes he

ac-

accosted her. She answered him with mixt sensations of pleasure and pain ; and two hours swiftly passed away, in which time Mr. Seymour informed her, he was at the college at Douay, and that having compleated his twenty-first year, he was about to return to England, and take possession of his estate, and that his mother and sister hourly expected him.

After that morning every following one he met our child, and endeavoured by every kindness and attention to gain a heart but too easy to be won ; yet still he never mentioned the smallest hint relative to marriage ; and whenever the conversation turned on that subject, he evaded speaking of it. Our unfortunate child, blinded by love for him, flattered herself he felt the same tender sentiments for her. Her letters no longer spoke the language of melancholy, but were written in a stile of ease and contentment.

In the meantime Mrs. Castle Fern was drawing her business to a close, and in another fortnight she intended to return home.

Mr. Seymour, who was a Roman catholic, only waited to celebrate the tutelar saint of the college ere he left France. The fortnight elapsed, and Mrs. Castle Fern's affairs were settled, and they left Pecquencourt, after being there about three months.

The parting between Symour and Maria was truly affectionate. He endeavoured by tender sentiments to hold her in the chains of love, while she promised to love no other.

They passed the first night at Dunkirk, and the next morning went on board the packet. Maria descended to the cabin, and had nearly arrived at the last step, when she beheld, sitting in a melancholy posture, her beloved Seymour; he started upon seeing her, but not till it was too late, for she had fallen lifeless on the floor.

“ When she recovered she inquired the reason of seeing him, when she thought he waited for the fete at Douay? he answered, because he could not live without her, and that he left the fete, in hopes of overtaking her,

her, though he knew his mother would be displeased.

“ The vessel, instead of being a prison, as she had found it when she left England, in the company of her lover became a paradise.

“ Mrs. Castle Fern, who was almost superannuated, had never observed the growing partiality between them, and therefore was pleased at the attentions he shewed to herself and her niece, and placed them all to the account of his politeness and good nature.

“ They spent the night at Dover, and the next morning proceeded to London, Mr. Seymour accompanying them on horseback. In town they separated, but not without vows of eternal love and adoration on his part.

“ When she arrived at Beiborough, all was again joy and happiness.

“ Sir Lewis, who adored his daughter, was most delighted. His breakfast was better made by Maria than by any one else; she amused him by reading to him; and, in short, by every little endearing attention doubly merited our love and affection.

“ She detested the idea of concealing any thing from me, and therefore told me minutely every circumstance about Seymour. I hoped for the sake of my child he would prove faithful, though I feared it augured bad, his silence on the subject of marriage; but I kept my fears within my bosom, and endeavoured to persuade her to forget him on the account of his being a catholic.

“ Several visits Mr. Seymour paid at the Castle, and one morning, with pleasure beaming from his animated eyes, he told us he had purchased a house two miles from the Castle, and that in a fortnight his mother and sisters would come to reside there, and begged me to honour them with a visit.

“ The fortnight passed away, and the next week I went to pay my respects at Clinton.

“ Mrs. Seymour seemed to me to verify the old proverb, of “ Full of courtesy full of craft.” A profusion of regard and esteem from herself and daughters were professed for me. And I took my leave with full conviction, that under the mask of softness and good humour

humour they possessed a great deal of art and cunning, for which people of their tenets are famous.

“ I likewise found out that her son’s affection for Maria was totally unknown to her.

“ When I returned from my visit I told my child what were my opinions of Mrs. Seymour and her daughters, for I did not take her with me.

“ In the meantime Seymour passed his time chiefly at the Castle; in short, he never left it but on Sundays, when mass called him away; and even Sir Lewis thought him all perfection, but in one instance, and that was, that he was a bigot to his religion.

“ A month passed away, and at the end of that time Mrs. and Miss Seymour returned my visit. The concern they felt was visible on their countenances when they beheld how extremely beautiful Maria was, and the reason of her son’s passing so much of his time at Besborough, seemed to flash like lightning on her mind; but she behaved with such

seeming fondness for our dear child, that her dislike to her was not to be detected. On her taking leave she asked us, in general terms, to dine at Clinton, and on her son's naming a day, we promised to go.

“ The day at length arrived, and accordingly we went; and Maria was delighted at the idea of being more intimate with the sisters of the only man she loved.

“ The eldest, like her mother, possessed of a great deal of art and cunning, without sense, and she endeavoured to learn her sentiments for her brother.

“ Innocent as an angel, she did not disown she loved him; and this confession entirely satisfied Miss Seymour.

“ The day passed off in great form; the joys of the table to them were great; for their rigid forbearance led them to fast three times a week.

“ The whole day Seymour scarcely ever kept his eyes off Maria; and his mother and sisters rallied him on his silence and inattention.

“ As

" As soon as we were gone they began a consultation to set the match aside ; but however I should tell you the way I came to know all the events that passed at Clinton, was from a protestant groom who lived with Mr. Seymour, and since came to my son, to tell him the numerous stratagems that were by Mrs. and Miss Seymour made use of ; and is now his favourite servant, for he immediately took him into his service.

" Their maid was privy to their schemes, and often a projector of them ; and they proposed several equally weak, to end an affection on which all his future happiness seemed to depend.

" At last they thought of a project ; they resolved to send for the Abbé of the college at Douay, and offer a good reward to him, to bring him to England ; when they hoped that priestcraft would have the power to prevent the match taking place.

" When he arrived, they had him smuggled into the house, and were in deep consultation for some time ; after which he went

away again, and strict orders were given to the servants not to tell their master he had been there.

“ In a few days after the groom was sent to fetch a young lady, though they pretended that she came without invitation.

“ Seymour, still as affectionate as ever, one day told Maria he could no longer live without her, and entreated her to give him her hand. The same afternoon he returned home, to inform his mother that he had made Miss Castle Fern an offer, and that he meant the marriage should take place in a short time. When he saw Miss Drayton he started with surprise, and begged to speak to his mother in private. He then told her his intentions. She heard it with pretended astonishment, since the lady was a heretic; but she made no objections, since she knew his temper would not brook resistance.

“ The Abbé was then privately sent for, and arrived about an hour after the conference.

“ The

“ The astonishment of Seymour on seeing him was extreme; he well knew that the Abbé Cheron, in the rigid duties of his college, was always employed, and they all pretended to think it extraordinary what could bring him to England.

“ He did not leave him long to conjecture, but desired a private audience.

“ The catholics place implicit faith in whatever the priests assert; and though the most absurd nonsense, and even impossibilities, they are nurtured in the soil of such dark superstition, that they place belief in whatever they choose to say.

“ The Abbé, as soon as they were closetted, called all the saints to witness the truth of what he said, that the reason of his coming to England was from a dream he had, wherein he had seen him on the brink of destruction; going to be married to a heretic, and that eternal perdition would attend his soul, if he committed so heinous an act.

“ Seymour stood agast at this intelligence, yet so bigotted was he, that he credited all he had said.

“ The Abbé likewise declared, that the saints, when he was kneeling before their shrines, told him that he must marry a catholic, if he meant to save his soul; and he even ventured to hint, that Miss Drayton was the person.

“ After preying on his feelings, in holding to his view the bugbear of his salvation, he left him to reflect on what he had said.

“ Miss Drayton now endeavoured, by every little art, to ensnare his affection, and by the direction of the priest she so far succeeded as to make Seymour believe he was in love with her for his salvation's sake, and they all hoped she would soon become his wife.

“ The next week we sent them an invitation to dinner, and received for answer, they would be happy to wait on us, if we would give them leave to bring a lady and gentlemen who were with them on a visit.

“ From

“ From being a constant visitor at the Castle, Seymour for several days never came near us. At first Maria was uneasy, but at length his neglect made her downright miserable; yet she was too proud to inquire after him.

“ The day on which they were to dine with us came; when they arrived they introduced the Abbé Cheron with all possible ceremony, as the former tutor of Mr. Seymour, and Miss Drayton as their most intimate friend.

“ Our dear Maria sat trembling, expecting every instant Mr. Seymour would notice her; but, fatal truth! he observed her with nothing but a slight bow. She was ready to burst into tears at such treatment, but that her pride forbade, and it gave her resolution to support one of the most agonizing days she had ever spent.

“ Dinner passed in solemn form; all were silent except Miss Drayton, who endeavoured to make an interest in Maria's heart, affected great intimacy with Seymour, called him by his christian name; and to say the truth, her
be-

behaviour was all that was cruel and unfeeling.

“ When we retired to the drawing-room, Mrs. Seymour set forth the superior virtue and accomplishments of Miss Drayton, and boasted of the long intimacy that had subsisted between their families.

“ At last the arrival of the gentlemen put an end to this harangue, which was like a dagger to our poor child’s heart.

Seymour sat listening to Miss Drayton’s boisterous nonsense for some time ; at last, as if breaking through the bonds of slavery that enthralled him, he left her side, and drew his chair close to Maria, and began conversing in his usual pleasing manner.

“ Mrs. Seymour looked at the Abbé, then at her daughter, while he pretending not to see them still kept his seat. The Abbé approached him, and desired to speak to him ; and they left the room.

“ An hour passed ; no Seymour returned ; enquiry was then made of the servants, if he was gone, which was answered in the affirmative ;

rive; they then ordered their carriage, and departed; and soon we retired to our chambers for the night, and I desired Maria to come to mine, and I then endeavoured to give her consolation, but, alas! love was too deeply rooted in her bosom, and she was so miserable that I even ventured to flatter her with hopes of his returning affection, though I saw in the artful Mrs. Seymour and the subtle Abbé Cheron an eternal barrier to their union.

“ The next morning Maria’s face bespoke the anguish of her mind; her rosy colour had forsaken her cheeks, and her eyes were sunk and hollow, and at that instant, I really believe if Sir Lewis had met Seymour, he would have murdered him for his baseness.

“ Day after day passed, and we heard nothing of him, till one morning, when I was sitting alone, the butler told me that Mr. and Miss Seymour and Miss Drayton were gone to Matlock together.

" I concealed it from my grief-worn child, but ere long she learned it from some of the servants.

" At first a delirium seized her; she raved, tore, talked of no one but Seymour; but by the goodness of her constitution she surmounted the fever; but it left her so low and weak, that we expected every day would be her last.

" Sir Lewis was now almost deranged with grief for his darling and favorite child.

" The physicians, who we sent for from London, to attend her, advised change of place and scene, as soon as she should be able to travel.

" A long miserable six weeks did she keep her bed, and then worn with sharp sorrow to the bone, she once more sat up.

" A faint gleam of pleasure now illumined our prospect, and the week following set off on our tour, accompanied by Augustus, who came from college to attend his dying sister.

" We

" We travelled slow, and stopt every where we thought there was any thing worthy our attention ; nothing seemed to give pleasure to Maria, though she endeavoured to force a smile on the countenance more calculated for despair.

" Sir Lewis flattered himself (for she always tried to appear cheerful before him) she was recovering, and from that hope pursued with avidity the journey.

" I saw too plainly she would never overcome the shock, and endeavoured to prepare my mind for the stroke.

" We went to Bath, which was very full, and here we intended staying some time. Our child seemed pleased with the place, and went every morning to the pump-room. She insisted on seeing the newspapers, expecting to see the marriage of Seymour ; but no such thing appeared, which seemed to give her pleasure, though she knew not why, for after his perfidy he never could think of possessing her, but like a drowning man, she caught at straws.

" We

“ We had been a week at Bath, and were going to Bristol in the afternoon. Maria was supported in an arm chair, sitting by the window, her head rested on her arm, when a carriage drove into the inn yard. Her attention was attracted by the noise, and she looked up; the footmen and postillions, by the white favours they wore, announced a wedding; and shortly after from the carriage descended the villain Seymour, leading in his bride the *ci devant* Miss Drayton.

“ Maria uttered a faint scream, and fell lifeless in her brother’s arms, who had ran to snatch her from the window.

“ The usual remedies were immediately administered, and after some time she opened her languid eyes. Happy had it been for her, had she closed them for ever.

“ The carriage was ordered, and we proceeded immediately to Bristol, in hopes that a different scene would in some degree change her melancholy ideas.

“ At

“ At first Augustus resolved to desire satisfaction of the base Seymour ; but the gentle Maria, who, though verging towards the grave by his villany, still loved him with her first affection, entreated as a dying wish, that the arm of Augustus might never be lifted against the life of Seymour.

“ Beautiful even in death, she still lingered day after day ; the salubrious air of Bristol at first affected her, and she found herself a little better ; but the scarlet spot of hectic on her grief worn cheek indicated a decline ; between life and death she lingered some time, till at length the last spark of life was extinct, and she expired in her father’s arms one morning, as he was lifting her from the carriage, on her return from the wells.

“ What a house of mourning was ours ; Sir Lewis, poor man, insisted on sitting by her corpse ; and for a whole day he never left the side of the bed on which her beauteous form lay ; at last, in a state of insensibility he was conveyed to his chamber, where he lay
for

for some days, without sense, and almost motion.

“ Augustus, who adored his sister, was scarcely in a better situation, and what I suffered heaven only knows.

“ The time arrived when her fair form was to be mingled with its kindred earth. Sir Lewis, in spite of entreaties, insisted on attending her funeral, and accompanied by Augustus, followed the hearse to Besborough, where her remains are deposited.

“ Sir Lewis endeavoured to support the agonizing minute with becoming composure. Augustus sobbed aloud, while the more stubborn grief of his father denied the relief of tears.

“ I was to follow them from Bristol the next day, and arrived just in time to see the body of Sir Lewis conveyed lifeless from the grave of his daughter. All my griefs were now forgot in endeavouring to appease his.

“ His

“ His son, with the duty and affection worthy the name of Castle Fern, never left him night nor day till he was composed.

“ Sir Lewis then shut himself up in his study, and for three months saw no one but his family and Mr. Edmonds, who performed the office of a pious and good man, by every day endeavouring to allay his griefs, and so far succeeded as to blunt the keen point of affliction, though not extract its arrows; and though the great destroyer, time, did much, he never recovered her loss; his temper suffered from misfortune, and he became severe and reserved; by the advice of the physicians he tried the air of Montpellier; and you, my dear, know the melancholy sequel of his death.”

“ Mrs. Castle Fern died soon after Maria, and left her money to Augustus.”

“ And pray,” said Eloise, sobbing, “ what is become of Mr. Seymour?”

“ He is, my dear, sufficiently punished for his villany. His wife, who married him from interest, not from affection, after living with him

him a twelvemonth, ran off with her groom, and an only child was proved illegitimate. Mrs. Seymour, as soon as she got into power, took no notice of her husband's mother and sisters, and they retired to a small house in Lincolnshire. He soon parted with his estate at Clinton, and a divorce has been obtained; and he now wanders up and down the world a prey to melancholy reflections. His wife spent him large sums of money, and he has since found debts of her contracting to a great amount; and his fortune is so impaired, that instead of twelve servants he keeps but two; a just reward for gaining the affections of the most innocent and amiable girl that ever existed, and then leaving her to pine in absence and despair, to marry a woman who has proved false to her marriage vows."

Her tears stopt her utterance.

The lovely Eloise attempted not to give her consolation; for as I have before observed,

ed, she knew reason has little to do with grief, or scarce ever assumes her empire till its violence is passed.

Eloise was little less affected than her benefactress ; the sad history she had just heard would have drawn tears from her eyes, as an individual whom she had never before heard of, but as the sister of the man she adored, she felt for her additional pity and sorrow.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

I Do not doubt but my readers have thought, as I do, that Sir Lewis and Lady Castle Fern were in some degree blameable in regard to their daughter, for not opposing, in its earliest stage, her union with a man of a religion they so greatly abhorred; a religion too which they considered under the mask of sanctity to cover many enormities.

But ere this they may have discovered, that where the happiness of their children were concerned, their resolves were weak,
and

and particularly Lady Castle Fern's, as in the instance of Eloise, who, though every hour convinced her more strongly than the last of the affection of her son to this lovely girl; yet, though she never lost sight of Sir Lewis's dying injunction, had not the resolution to use her endeavours to break an attachment that only brought misery to two amiable people.

Yet certainly, though a great weakness, it is an amiable one; and I dare say, like me, they are more inclined to pity than censure it.

Lady Castle Fern and Eloise adjourned to change their dress, as Mr. Edmonds was coming to pass the evening with them. Dinner was soon announced, and they took their seats at the table just as Sir Augustus entered the room.

The swollen eyes of Lady Castle Fern and Eloise's did not pass unobserved by him; he

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I

looked

looked first at one and then at the other, in anxious curiosity and inquiry; either fearing to renew their grief, or for some other reason forbearing to inquire the cause of it.

Dinner passed in silence; Sir Augustus fearing to speak lest he should touch on the tender string of their woes, while Eloise's thoughts wandered to the melancholy history of Maria; and the sadness that inspired, rendered her incapable of conversation.

As soon as the dinner was removed, Lady Castle Fern seeing the curiosity of her son, told him the employment of the morning.

He then wanted no further *denouement* of their grief-worn eyes;

“ That name for ever sad, for ever dear,

“ Still breathed with sighs, still ushered with a tear,”

He knew would draw tears from people less blest with sensibility than his much loved Eloise; he was therefore sensible how much
more

more than common minds it would affect her's; and he dropt the tear of affection and regret for his sister on her lily hand as he kissed it; which token of affection he had before given the hand of his revered mother.

Soon after the desert was taken off they retired to the rose-wood drawing-room, to await the arrival of the vicar, who soon after was announced.

If Eloise had appeared to him a lovely girl, the first time he beheld her, he now thought her doubly so; the langour and dejection of her countenance rendered it to him irresistibly fascinating, inasmuch that he wished she was married to Augustus, that on that plea he might salute so lovely a woman.

Her manners too appeared to him remarkably pleasing; so feminine, without affectation; so natively elegant, that he thought every man must almost be in love with her.

This was not however the case with Mr. Edmonds; he was *trop passéé* to think of again marrying, and he unfortunately had had too much of matrimony already. His wife had now been dead some years; and as he paid large sums of money for brandy to make her ill, and afterwards physic to cure her, he did not lament her death, nor “bear about the mockery of woe;” nor did he apostrophize the virtues, in a sermon, she never possessed.

His admiration for our heroine was of that kind that warms the breast of a parent.

As the vicar loved a rubber of whist, they set down to cards; Lady Cattle Fern and Mr. Edmonds against Sir Augustus and Eloise; the latter were as reserved towards each other as usual.

After supper Mr. Edmonds took his leave, and the family soon retired to rest.

A fortnight they had now been returned, and the following day being Sunday, at half past ten the old family coach attended at the great gate of the Castle.

It had been a rule ever since the Earls of Kinmore, that all the men servants, (even the butler) should go behind the carriage to church.

Nothing in ancient houses are kept up like ancient customs and forms. The servants and customs had descended from generation to generation in *statu quo* ever since the first Earl, which was in the reign of Henry the Seventh, which was in 1485.

Behold then the butler in a little powdered wig, in which his face looked like the full moon, and a spruce suit of black clothes, after assisting the ladies and Sir Augustus to enter the carriage, mounted behind, though Triton, Sir Augustus's valet, contended for the honor of going first. The butler, though not over

I 3

nimble,

put his best foot foremost, and left the *unshere*, as he termed him, to cackle and go on; he however soon mounted, and was a head and shoulders taller than the other, by a shake of his *tete bien poudré*, sent a volley of dust into the good man's eyes, and over his shoulders, that though not very irascible, he now clenched his fist, and with one blow sent his sputtering companion again to the ground; but with the agility natural to his countrymen, he remounted, though as tame as a church mouse, fearing the despotic power and strength of his antagonist's arm, should render his coeuffeur so *derangé*, as to be incapable of being imitated by the servants of *mi lor Anglais*, which his vanity led him to suggest would be the case.

The footmen, when the controversy was ended, likewise took their station behind the coach, and it then moved slowly down the hill (though as fast as the long-tailed blacks ever went) and they entered the church just as the clock struck eleven.

The

The belles of Besborough, as soon as flying report had unmarried Sir Augustus Castle Fern as fast as they had tied the gordian knot, from the neighbouring farmers' daughters, to the highest rank of Misses, determined to assail his heart with their artillery.

Even my lady Duchefs and my lady Countefs, thought Sir Augustus a desirable husband for their Lady Bettys and Lady Susans.

A young handsome baronet of high rank, and a good fortune, was no despicable thing for young unportioned girls of quality ; and as dress has ever been a requisite to set off the persons of ladies, otherwise not very handsome, so did each lady appropriate theirs as it became them.

Black, white, pink, green, and the whole list of colours were alternately tried, and their glasses consulted on the occasion.

Their confiderate mothers remembered, that when it was their day to fhine, that firft impreffions were never obliterated; they therefore chofe that their darlings fhould the firft time fhew off to advantage.

They had heard much of the beauty of the *bella Incognita*; but each flattered herfelf, that by affiftance of Gowland's Lotion, rouge, pearl powder, &c. they fhould render themfelves irrefiftibly lovely in the eyes of the youthful baronet, wreath round a heart he did not poffefs, and *enfin* become the blooming miftrefs of Belborough Caftle, fo noted for its noble poffeffors.

The pew belonging to the Caftle was in the centre of the church; around it were curtains of filk; but as Lady Caftle Fern detefted the appearance of fuperiority, particularly in the houfe of the Almighty, fhe never fuffered them to be drawn.

The

The different families had come sooner than usual; for they were determined to have enough staring at Eloise, and longer time to shew their smiling faces to Sir Augustus.

As soon as our trio were seated, all glasses and eyes were turned on our heroine, and then followed a whisper and a laugh; however in the end it turned against their views, since it caused so lovely a blush on the cheek of the modest Eloise, that even in the eyes of Sir Augustus she appeared in additional charms and beauty.

Ah! sighed he, as he looked at her blushing cheeks, how would my proud heart glory in leading so perfect, so lovely a creature to the altar, the blooming, the amiable bride of the heir of Castle Fern, how would this hand be honoured by receiving hers; but, oh 'tis an ecstasy I must never feel, a felicity my cruel fate denies me even to think of; for, alas! sickening recollection tells me my hope never can be realized.

I 5

While

While he was musing on this melancholy subject, the youthful ladies were all sighing, languishing, ogling, nay almost dying to engage his attention.

They did at length engage it; but it was to ridicule not to admire them; even had they been as beautiful as Venus, it would have been all one, for a heart he had none to give away; and his bosom was sheathed with the breast-plate of cold indifference for any woman but Eloise, and as she never could be his, he resolved to lead a life of celibacy, though there were times when he had thought on such a state with horror; but, fatal truth! times to him were changed, and the pleasing retrospection, when he had thought on matrimony as the fiat of his happiness, now only served to shew him the mournful present.

It cannot therefore excite surprise, that had the town and country bred ladies even fallen in coveys at his feet, his vanity would not
have

have been flattered; but had Eloise shewn him the least mark of affection or attention, his heart would have exulted with happiness, and an eclaircissement would have taken place between; but this, as I have before remarked, she studiously avoided.

After church, the mamma's of the different young ladies took themselves to their dressing-room, there to commune with their own hearts.

They too evidently saw that Sir Augustus was held fast in the chains of love, and that the centre of attraction that held him was our fair heroine.

His eyes, they observed, were scarcely ever turned from her, and his admiration of her lovely face would have been found out by people who had made the hearts of men less their study than les bonne meres of whom I now relate.

Youth they knew was sanguine, and seized on a pleasing pursuit with avidity ; but if an obstacle intervenes, it relinquishes it with disgust ; it was therefore dangerous to mention it to their daughters ; but hoped and flattered themselves that they would transplant our heroine in Sir Augustus's heart ; while the daughters, less keen sighted than their mothers, fancied he viewed her with indifference ; he had never, they observed, spoken to her during church time ; and this they augured well for their purposes, which were to captivate his heart, and sail down the stream of matrimony.

The nobles and gentry only waited for the family at Besborough, to make their appearance at church before they paid the congratulatory visit on their return to the Castle, and this preliminary of etiquette taking place, they all with one accord drove to the Castle.

For

For three hours was Eloise doomed to be the object of their attention and gaze. She stood their attacks like a heroine, and except by a transitory blush, took no other notice of their rudeness.

Sir Augustus, after making his appearance, and listening with seeming attention to their ebullitions of nonsense, made an apology for not staying longer, and then left the room.

This was not a little mortification to the young ladies, who had hoped to gain his heart by the force of their eloquence and rhetoric. This was dashing them from the height of felicity to the dark abyfs of despair. A future opportunity might not occur; however rather than be disappointed of shewing their brilliant wit, they chose Eloise should be *obsédé* by their conversation.

She listened for two hours to their talk of high life, of fine people, and fine things, with
the

the utmost good-humour and politeness, and endeavoured to appear interested in what they said ; but happy was she when they took their leave.

Lady Castle Fern, as soon as they were gone, asked her what she thought of the English noblesse.

“ How did you like Lady Elizabeth and Lady Susan Colvil, the Duke of Rawdon’s daughters ?”

“ Indeed, madam, there were so many ladies that I don’t know which you mean.”

She then described them to her by their dress (the only way us females know each other.)

“ I think,” said Eloise, smiling, “ they have all the coquetry of our nation, without the elegance that generally accompanies it.”

“ Very prettily described, indeed, Eloise ; so you really pronounce them coquettes ?”

“ I

“ I did not say immediately that ; I only observed I thought them rather coquetish.”

“ Really, my dear, I honor your penetration for discovering what every one knows who has the pleasure of their acquaintance ; they are now in want of husbands, and are on the look out for every man of fortune they see ; nor would they, I believe, think themselves badly settled in the domain of Besborough as Lady Elizabeth or Lady Susan Castle Fern ; but if there was not another woman in the world, Augustus would rather remain single than unite his fate with either of the Lady Colvils.”

On the mention of Augustus, a transitory blush of conscious love for him overspread the cheek of Eloise ; but fortunately for her, Sir Augustus entered the room, and it passed unobserved by Lady Castle Fern. From riding in the wind, he had acquired an animated glow that made him look enchantingly ; his auburn hair from the rude blasts of the easterly wind was dishevelled and almost
without

without powder, and at that instant had Sir Joshua Reynold's been present he would have acknowledged that a finer picture of symmetry and grace could not be exhibited in the bright circles of a court, or at a birth day ball.

The afternoon they were to spend at Mr. Edmonds's, and about six o'clock, (for Lady Castle Fern kept not London hours) they set off, and soon arrived at the vicarage; it was a neat white house, and with Parnell we may observe, that

“ It seemed to speak its masters turn of mind ;

“ Content and not for praise but virtue kind.”

It was situated in a fertile valley between two immense rocky hills, the furniture was like the owner, old fashioned and antique, but commodious and comfortable.

The parlour in which they sat looked towards a hill from which issued several streams, that ran over rough stones, and turned at the
bottom

bottom into a cavern, where it became petrified into spar.

Eloise did the honours of the tea table, and after spending the evening in agreeable conversation, (for it was Sunday, and cards were prohibited) they returned to the Castle, highly pleased with their visit to Felbrig, which was the name of the parsonage.

On their return Sir Augustus found a letter for him from his friend Wharton.

The contents of which were as follows:

“ My dear Castle Fern,

“ Few things in this sublunary world could have given me more pleasure than hearing you were returned to the quiet walls of Besborough, and I hope you and the rest of the respectable family are in good health. The employ-

employment I find in my parochial duties have hitherto prevented me from embracing the friend of my youth, the dear sharer of my infantine pleasures, and my benefactor, from whom I receive all the benefits I possess (and I wish to persuade myself I enjoy) if I do not, 'tis the fault of the lovely Eloise, *mais assez de cela.*

“ In the ensuing week, I mean to pay my respects at Besborough, and I hope I shall have acquired fortitude sufficient to meet the once object of my love, now of my esteem and regard, with the same feelings I should a sister.

“ True happiness, my dear Augustus, rarely falls to the lot of mortals ; you remember in our school exercises the words of Pope,

“ The lot of man's to suffer and to die.”

“ To you may it be dealt out with a plenteous hand ; may a long uninterrupted scene of health, fortune, and rank, secure you the happiness I wish you.

“ Had

“ Had I succeeded in the darling wish of my heart, I would almost have defied fate to have rendered me miserable ; but my wayward destiny ordained it otherwise, and I flatter myself I submit ; however of this I am confident, that I do not repine or murmur against Providence.

“ Present my respects to Lady Castle Fern, and the ever dear Eloise ; soon after you receive this letter, I hope to embrace the friend of my early love.

WILLIAM WHARTON.”

“ Poor Wharton,” said Augustus, as he put the letter into his pocket, “ there are other people fighting for the same thing you are.’

“ How does he do?” said Lady Castle Fern, “ and when shall we see him at the Castle ?”

“ He

“ He is very well, though he writes but in indifferent spirits,” looking full in Eloise’s face.

She blushed, though she knew not why; her vanity was not so great as to lead her to suppose he was out of spirits on her account; she hoped he had long ceased to think of so insignificant a being.

The colour that now diffused itself over her countenance was caused by accusation direct; for Sir Augustus, by staring in her face, had certainly accused her, or at least suspected that she was still essential to his friend’s happiness.

“ But when,” said Lady Castle Fern, seeing the stare of her son and the blush of Eloise were likely to last the evening, “ shall we see our respectable friend?”

“ Next week, he says he shall endeavour to come and stay a few days with us.”

The

The butler then entered the room, to announce the supper.

Eloise complained of a slight head-ach, and begged to retire to her chamber.

Sir Augustus was vexed; he feared what he had said about Mr. Wharton was displeasing to her, and soon after the cloth was removed, he took his candle, and retired to his study.

Fearful lest the dear mistress of his affections, nay of his joy and affliction, was really unwell, he walked softly up to her chamber door, and listened if he could hear her move.

At first the room was so still, that he thought no one was in it; at length he heard her sigh, take up her harp, and play a hymn to liberty; she then again sighed, and kept running over the chords, as if in deep meditation;

tation; she then paced the room for some minutes, at the same time murmuring as if in tone of complaint.

He was so agitated and uneasy at supposing her unwell, that he was just going to knock softly at her door, when a demon in the form of Mrs. Bridget, with her candle, going to her chamber, prevented him; and fearing detection, he hastened down the back stairs, and again retired to his study, where he sat musing and meditating till the time piece announced the hour of two, and he then, dispirited and uneasy, retired to his bed.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

THE reversion of the sun alone told Eloise that time passed ; for each day was the counterpart of the other ; no bright ray gilded her path, nor did any additional sombre cloud darken it.

It was now the pleasant and enlivening month of April, and was within a few days of the twelvemonth, since she had been under the hospitable roof of her benefactors.

What a chain of events had befallen her within three years. The countries of Italy,
France,

France, and England, had in that short time been her residence. Till she came to France she never breathed a sigh, save on the death of her father. How many heart-rending ones had escaped since that time, and with scarcely but one source of uneasiness.

She ventured to remonstrate with herself for sinking under a weight she thought it her duty to shake off: This was her love for Augustus; an affection woven with the threads of her fate, and wreathed like an adder round her heart; and she blamed herself, though she knew not how to rectify it, for suffering it, like the Spartan boy, to prey on her vitals.

Sometimes when she meditated on the subject, she lent her ear to the subtle art of sophistification, and endeavoured to convince herself 'twas no crime to love so perfect and so amiable a creature as Sir Augustus.

These

These meditations and her little dog were her only companions in her morning rambles, which were frequent, as the weather grew fine, and the days long.

Lady Castle Fern well knew the pursuits of eighteen to be different to those of fifty, therefore begged to be left alone some part of the day, under the pretence of settling the domestic concerns of the Castle, that Eloise might be at liberty to spend her time in the manner most congenial to herself; and that was in walking in the park, or the adjacent wood.

But, ah! deluded Eloise, beware of solitude; 'tis the food of love, and the direct path to misery.

A month had now elapsed since Mr. Wharton's letter came, yet he was not arrived; and Sir Augustus concluded he had, as on other occasions, forgot it, when one

morning, as they were sitting at breakfast, the butler announced Mr. Wharton.

The meeting between the gentlemen presented a striking picture of a friendship founded on the basis of time.

Eloise received him as she would a friend, without any emotion; not even a blush was on her cheek; if there was, her guardian angel caused it to be so transitory, that even the scrutinizing eyes of Sir Augustus did not observe it, though he had placed them on her countenance, to read her inmost thoughts.

She modestly extended her hand to welcome him.

He trembled with agitation, and the hand he had once solicited, he now scarcely ventured to touch.

Time

Time wore off the disagreeable sensations he first experienced at the sight of Eloise, and in a few hours he was restored to his usual tranquillity, nay almost happiness, in the company of her who, in spite of her rejection, still possessed his heart.

A week did he pass at Besborough, without reflecting, that every instant he swallowed more of the intoxicating draught from her beauty and gentleness.

On the Saturday morning Mr. Wharton, by the avocations of his duty on the day following, (not having left any one to officiate for him in his absence) was obliged to tear himself from the pleasing contemplation of Eloise's loveliness.

His natural indolence of disposition prevented his rousing himself from the pleasing lethargy he was in; and at the end of the week he found himself more in love with her than ever.

This Augustus perceived; and when the hour of his departure approached, felt a concealed pleasure that he was going; the arrows of jealousy were ever ready to pierce him at every breath of wind that wafted a soft speech or tender look to Eloise.

The latter Mr. Wharton had but too often done, when her eyes were averted from his affectionate glances; and these Augustus could not behold without some uneasy sensations, which if not quite amounting to jealousy, was divided by a ligament so fine as to be scarcely perceptible.

As the morning was unfavourable, Augustus insisted on his going in his post-chaise, and the servant was to lead his horse. This Wharton at first opposed; but over-awed by his friend, he turned on Eloise a desponding look, threw himself in the chaise, which by the cracking thong of the postillion, bore him fast from Besborough, where
dwelt

dwelt all his treasure, and where in former times he had spent so many happy days, then

“Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw,”

the heart-piercing deity thought him beneath his notice, nor at that time an object fit to become a votary at his shrine, before which he now made him bow with implicit obedience.

But now let us turn away from the court of Cupid, to the Duke of Rawdon's family, who had long been petitioning him to wound Sir Augustus in their cause; but that wound was already given by the innocent Eloise; and the adamant breast-plate that inclosed him would have resisted the most pointed arrow from the quiver of the blind god; but as this was totally unknown to Lady Elizabeth and Lady Susan Colvil, they seized on Hope, who never quitted their grasp, and who, vainly deluded with the idea, that Sir Augustus would become the *caro sposa* of one of them.

K 3

At

At Rawdon Park there was a consultation as grave and as solemn as a consultation of physicians. The case was almost the same, with this difference only, that the patient they were so interested about, would possibly (to use a genteel expression) give them the go by, by marrying Miss Montblanc, instead of (to use another genteel term) slip through the physician's fingers into the grave.

This case was equally desperate and dangerous, and required equal consultation with a fever or sore throat.

Figure to yourselves then, in her Grace's dressing-room, herself and daughters in deep meditation how to secure the heart of our youthful hero ; but the first thing they had to consider was, whether he really possessed one ; but at least his hand was disengaged ; and as for the heart, 'twas a little fluttering, foolish burthen, that any man, when once married, would be glad to rid himself of to the first woman who would take it of him ;
though,

though, to say the truth, the handsome person of Augustus had made a scratch in the bosom of the Lady Elizabeth, but as it was not of the incurable order of wounds, I shall pass it over without further mention.

Such then were these ladies' ideas on the score of matrimony, which my fair readers well know are the counterpart of most young ladies of fashion.

The result of their meditation, was a masquerade to be given at Rawdon Park, to which the family at the Castle were to be invited; and Lady Elizabeth, who was extremely skilful in pretty designs for tickets, (for her Grace loved every thing of the kind *comme il faut*) she sat herself negligent down to her work-table, and with a pencil drew the God of Mirth supporting an Ægis, on which the masquerade on the 17th of May was to be printed, and underneath were these words: "No Dominos admitted."

On the corners of the tickets were Cupids and their votaries, Hymen, which Lady Susan wisely observed were applicable to those on whose account the entertainment was made. This remark excited a self-approving smile from Lady Elizabeth, which was followed by encomiums on her invention by my lady Duchefs.

As soon as they were designed, a servant on horseback was sent to the next town, Derby, to get them engraved with the utmost expedition; in three days they were to be done; and at the stated time the servant was again dispatched, and returned in a few hours to Rawdon Park.

Three of them were immediately folded in paper, and sealed with the arms, ducal cornet, crest, and supporters of the ancient house of Rawdon, and sent to Besborough Castle, where with the swiftness of an eagle I must wing my flight, that I may inform my fair readers the reception they there met with.

The

The butler presented them to his lady with a bow, telling her at the same time that the servant waited for an answer.

“ Let him stay a little while, and I will write one,” replied Lady Castle Fern.

The butler retired, and retailed to the sovereign of the stables the message, who stalked into the servants'-hall, there to retail the anecdotes of Rawdon Park to the domestics of Besborough Castle.

In the mean time Lady Castle Fern broke the immense quantity of wax that confined the paper, and discovered the before-mentioned tickets.

“ Here, Eloise,” said she, “ are tickets for a masquerade at the Duchess of Rawdon's; I have too recently commenced my widowhood, to think of such an entertainment; but to-morrow I will ride over to Rawdon Park,

K 5

and

and ask permission to present my ticket to a friend, who will chaperon you, as in England you cannot be seen without."

Eloise entreated not to go; but Lady Castle Fern desired she would; and her motives were these: She hoped that change of scene might prevent her ideas from dwelling so much on Augustus; and she concluded by saying, "Augustus, will you write an answer for me?"

He then retired to his study, and soon returned with a note sealed, addressed to the fair mistress of the domain of Rawdon, which was then given to the groom who took his departure immediately.

After some little time Sir Augustus broke the silence, by saying, "I hate masquerades."

"I thought," said Lady Castle Fern, staring, "I had heard you say you were very fond of them."

"Yes,

" Yes, so I was, in the days of my simplicity and folly. When I was at Venice, I thought them very charming; but they are infinitely superior to those in England; and in addition to my dislike of them, I have an engagement to spend some days with Wharton at that time."

" An engagement!" replied Lady Castle Fern, " I wish I had known it before, I would have sent an excuse for Eloise's not going. Now it is impossible; her Grace will know we have no engagement of so long standing; and therefore, if I now send an excuse, she will be offended, and not, I think, without reason."

Sir Augustus remained silent, and she continued.

" Instead therefore of going to-morrow to ask permission to give my ticket to Mrs. Wilmot, I must write; for ill versed in invention, what excuse can I make for your not accepting her Grace's invitation?"

“ Whatever you please, madam,” replied he, and left the room.

Now although his haughty soul disdained a falsehood, yet so great in this instance was the temptation that he could not resist.

After Eloise retired to her bed chamber, her thoughts reverted to the masquerade.

There were times, thought she, when I could have supported a character with pleasure ; but, alas ! 'tis a difficult task to wear the semblance of mirth, when the heart is sad. She wished to give up the idea of the masquerade, but Lady Castle Fern had seemed to be particularly desirous of her going ; and whatever were her own wishes, she determined to yield them an easy conquest to those of her much-loved protectress, and with cheerfulness obey. She then fell into a calm repose, the reward of her grateful resolution.

Sin

Sir Augustus, who had told his mother he did not intend to go, had at the same time, in the answer he had written to the Duchess, said he should do himself the honour of waiting on her. The reason of his concealment was, that Eloise might not know he was there; and he was well convinced, that if he told Lady Castle Fern, he might just as well tell Eloise.

He likewise thought it impolitic to let his mother go to Rawdon Park, to ask the favour of making over her ticket to Mrs. Wilmot; he therefore wrote a note to the Duchess, in his mother's name, to request that favour; and when he shewed it to Lady Castle Fern, it restored happiness to her bosom, as she feared what she had said on the preceding evening might have vexed her much loved son, and this conciliatory step on his part proved her uneasiness without foundation. The groom was then dispatched with the note.

The

The answer the Duchefs returned to it was what might be expected; that ſhe was ſorry ſhe was denied the pleaſure of her ladyſhip's company; but that ſhe ſhould be happy to ſee Mrs. Wilmot.

In the mean time her Grace had ſent out four hundred tickets to the different people of faſhion (which at this ſeaſon of the year were but few) who were at Buxton and Matlock; and to all her numerous acquaintance in the county; and even from London ſhe invited as many gentlemen as her houſe would accommodate, which was not a few.

The next thing to be conſidered at the Caſtle, was in what character Eloife ſhould appear, for no dominos were admitted.

She at firſt thought of being an Italian fortune-teller, as ſhe was a perfect miſtreſs of the language; but ſoon ſhe recollected, that as few ſpoke it ſo well, or ſo fluently as herſelf,

self, she should be detected. It was at length agreed she should support the character of a Savoyarde, and accompany a guitar with her voice. This seemed an easy character, since she would be at liberty to sing or let it alone.

Her dress was to be a lavender brown short gown, decorated with blue ribbons; the sleeves were made above the elbows, and turned up with a blue cuff; such as are worn by that description of people in Savoy. Her head dress was a small hat, the same colour as her gown, lined with blue, and a wreath of corn flowers round it. The guitar was to be slung round her neck with a blue ribbon.

Mrs. Bridget was accordingly set to work, and assisted by Eloise, finished the paraphernalia a week before the important event.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

SIR AUGUSTUS in the mean time had been to his friend Anthony to make interest with him for two very essential things; namely a room at his cottage to dress in on the night of the entertainment at Rawdon Park, and his eternal secrecy; both of which were readily granted; and though Anthony guessed that his motive was to surprise Miss Eloise, yet so great was his fear of again drawing down his master's anger, that he made no remarks, tho' much to his sorrow, for he wished much to have had an opportunity

tunity to expatiate on the masquerade, and likewise on Eloise, but he knew he dared not animadvert.

Sir Augustus next bethought himself how it was possible to see Eloise's apparel, as on the day before the masquerade he should set off on his pretended visit to Mr. Wharton.

To make Mrs. Bridget his confidante, as he had done in respect to the lock of Eloise's hair, he thought dangerous, having lately found in that gentlewoman a love of telling every thing she knew, and sometimes more; but as they passed under the denomination of abigail's licences, Bridget thought herself authorised in so doing. On this account then Sir Augustus chose rather to trust to opportunity than certainty in the hands of Mrs. Bridget.

The next morning, as the day was remarkably fine, Lady Castle Fern and Eloise took a drive out in a little cabriole; their absence
seemed

seemed to afford a favourable opportunity to explore Eloise's dress; and soon after they drove from the gate, he saw Mrs. Bridget go across the park, when thinking this the most propitious instant, he walked softly up stairs.

In the great gallery he found one of the domestics sweeping it; he stopt and walked about, as if gazing at the pictures, and the servant, too respectful to go on with her business when he was there, immediately left the gallery.

He then glided into Eloise's dressing-room, and softly shut the door. He easily found her dress, and surveyed every part of it minutely; he was then again committing it to the drawer, where it had been deposited, when he discovered a little box which excited his curiosity, and he opened it; it contained the picture of her mother; but so like herself, that he really thought it was her's.

“ She

"She cannot," said Augustus, eyeing it with delight, "place any regard on the picture of herself, when every mirror in the house will bear testimony of the beauty of the original; I am confident the loss of it to her will not cause so much pain as the possession of it will convey pleasure to me. Yes, dear image of the face I adore, thou shalt, thou must be mine; if any thing can recompense my not possessing the original, it is having the resemblance of the most perfect woman heaven ever formed."

He fervently kissed it, tied the black ribbon that was fastened to it round his neck, and then uttering another apostrophe, slipped it next his bosom, and with trembling steps walked slowly down stairs, highly pleased with the trophy he had stolen.

When they returned from their drive, he looked steadfastly at Eloise, to compare the likeness. The picture appeared to him to have been done when she was about sixteen,
and

and she was now eighteen; the resemblance was extremely strong, yet he thought it much inferior in beauty to herself.

The day at length arrived, in which our heroine was for the first time to shew herself at a masquerade; but I should have told my readers, that on the preceding one, soon after breakfast, Sir Augustus had taken his leave, saying he did not know how long he should be absent.

In a short time after the dinner cloth was removed, Eloise went to her toilet, to adorn herself for the evening; she soon finished her *habiliament*, and descended to the drawing-room, where she found Mr. Edmonds, whom Lady Castle Fern had sent for, to keep her company in her protégé's absence.

Great encomiums were passed on her tasteful dress and her beauty; for in such simple attire she shone gracefully elegant; nor could the reverend divine, though past the age of gallantry,

gallantry, help applying the following lines

“ Grace was in her steps, heaven in her eye,

“ In all her gestures dignity and love.”

Her modest blushes shewed how much she was pained by appearing in a dress she considered so ridiculous, and she sat in hopes that every instant the carriage would arrive which was to convey her to Rawdon Park ; it was to be there at half past eight ; yet nine o'clock came, and it was not arrived ; at length, when she had almost given it up, supposing that Mrs. Wilmot had forgotten her, it drew up to the gate.

She flung her guitar round her snowy neck, and took her mask in her hand.

“ God bless you, my dearest child,” said Lady Castle Fern, fervently embracing her, “ remember to be courageous ; there are no dangers such as you have read of in romances ;
we

we do not live in the age of Knight-errantry, when some one might be inclined to carry you off."

After promising to be mindful of what her benefactress had said, Eloise wished her a good evening.

As our heroine was going through one of the anti-rooms, she saw a looking-glass, in which she surveyed herself *en passant*.

"I wish," said she to herself, "Augustus was to be there."

I am sorry, readers, for the motive that gave birth to such a speech; I would even conceal it, were it consistent with my duty; but my task, as I have before observed, is to

"Catch the manners living as they rise."

Know

Know then that it was a spark of that inherent vanity we all possess ; that as she passed the mirror where she saw herself looking so transcendantly beautiful, she could not help uttering a wish that Augustus should see her.

Tell me, my candid readers, was it natural or unnatural, fit or unfit, that a lovely girl of eighteen, looking more like an angel than a mortal, should wish that the man to whom she had given her heart, the only man too she ever loved, she ever could love, should see her.

If unfit, I hope you will commit the fault to oblivion, and drink of the Lethean draught when you have perused the preceding pages. The only palliation I can make is, that had I been in the situation of Eloise, I should have done the same ; but a truce to animadversions on *her* conduct, for I must proceed in the straight road of my narrative.

Mrs.

Mrs. Wilmot was a nabobess of eminent fortune ; her husband was still in India, amassing more wealth for her to spend ; her house, her servants, liveries, and every appendage of finery, was more gaudy than her neighbours, and consequently excited the envy of them ; but as it was a passion Lady Castle Fern was an entire stranger to, and as Mrs. Wilmot was really a good humoured woman, they lived on terms of common intimacy.

When Eloise got into the carriage, she was struck with the finery of her dress ; she was in the character of a Sultana ; her robe was of gold Muslin, drawn up with bunches of pearls ; her head dress was a turban ornamented with gold, fine feathers, and a profusion of jewels ; her mask was studded with diamonds ; and by this ridiculous circumstance Eloise hoped to find her when they were separated.

I must now return to Augustus, who on the day he departed, after wishing his mother
adieu,

adieu, mounted his horse, and attended by his favorite groom, rode gently down the hill, deep in meditation, or equally probable, not thinking at all.

His horse received no check when he turned into the high road to Derby, and therefore proceeded in a gentle trot till it arrived at the Cross-keys, where was a stable which Rosinante well knew was stored with hay and corn of the very best quality.

On the horse's making a halt, Sir Augustus looked up, and saw his steed had saved him the trouble of considering which way he should go, by bringing him to Derby ; the only and best thing to be done, was now to dine there ; and after dismounting, he walked into the inn and ordered his dinner.

The newspapers afforded him sufficient amusement till it was ready, and soon after dinner he ordered his horse and servant, but was at a loss to know how to dispose of him-

self. After some time he recollected that it was most probable his friend Rycroft was in the country ; and no longer suffering his animal to have a will of his own, he proceeded in a brisk trot to Meriden. When he arrived there, he heard, to his disappointment, his friend was from home ; and as the evening was unfavourable, he determined to return and pass the night at Derby. He rode over the forest through a violent storm of hail ; no creature but himself and groom, seemed to be without shelter, save an old horse that was browsing on the barren heath ; yet no light could they discern, which could act as a beacon to afford them any. When they arrived at Derby they were wet through ; yet Augustus would not change his clothes, but sat down to a solitary supper, rendered more unpleasant by his uneasy reflections, and soon after he retired to his bed.

The next day he passed his time in strolling about the town, and reading the newspapers,
and

and after dinner mounted his palfry, and proceeded to the house of the old porter.

He was now on the "tiptoe of expectation" for the evening; and he sincerely wished the hour was arrived when he was to fall forth in quest of adventures.

At the cottage he found a neat room fitted up for him, with the best looking-glass the house afforded.

Anthony's daughters, who had been told by him, in his usual manner, that he would flee them alive if they preached of Sir Augustus's coming, were dressed in their holiday suits to wait on him, supposing that such a great gentleman must want a *power* of waiting; but in this they were mistaken, for Augustus never gave trouble where he could avoid it.

He had revolved in his mind, pro and con, in what character he should appear. At first the idea had suggested itself to him of being a Savoyarde, with a violoncello, as that would give him an opportunity of conversing with Eloise, being both in the same character; but the questions he wished to put to her would in that case be deemed impertinent and rude.

The whole list of characters he run over, without pleasing himself; and he forgot the only one calculated for him; but fortune, who had lately played him many shabby tricks, now repaid him for past disappointments, and whispered him to be a fortune-teller; this dress then he determined upon; he procured a mask with a long beard, an emblem of wisdom; his coat was old, to shew his poverty; over his hair he wore a white wig, which gave him the appearance of grey hair; and thus equipt, he sat himself down in a window, to see when Mrs. Wilmot's carriage passed. His post-chaise, which had
been

been brought privately by his groom, was then to draw out of a barn, and to follow at some distance.

He waited with patience an hour, and another half he passed with the expectation of a man violently in love; still no post-chaise came; and at length he ordered his carriage, and drove to Rawdon-Park, taking it for a certainty, that Eloise, though an unusual thing, had gone the other road.

When he arrived at the house, he made his way, though with difficulty, to the Duchess, through the motley throng. She was unmasked, and after paying his compliments to her, he turned to the Duke, a short duck-legged man, who was seated quietly on a sofa, in a corner of the room; his feet did not near reach the ground, and he looked more like a clown in a pantomime than a peer of the realm. When Sir Augustus came up to him, he did not observe him, for he was lost in the reflection, how his schemes had been

perverted; for when he brought his family into the country at Easter, though fore against the will of my Lady Duchess, it was with a view to save *their* health and *his* money, which were alike endangered by dissipation.

Sir Augustus, after paying his respects to him, threw himself on a chair, to wait till the fair Savoyarde should pass, and to consider in what form of words to address the adored mistress of his heart.

Here he was at liberty to observe the votaries of folly and fashion, two deities who generally accompany each other, and by their influence contrive to render ridiculous whoever worships at their shrine.

After observing sultans, sultanas, nuns, friars, &c. &c. Sir Augustus was obliged to shift his quarters, by a large party who called themselves the National Convention; their arms were encircling each other in the fraternal embrace; their masks represented skeletons;

skeletons ; they were so boisterous and noisy, that unable to sit near them any longer, he arose and went into the largest room, where most of the grotesque figures then were.

At last he heard the sound of a guitar, and turning round, saw a Savoyarde in the dress of Eloise, and who was sitting in a window seat.

She stopt when he approached her.

“ Belle Savoyarde,” said he, “ music has charms to sooth the savage breast, to soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak,” and even a man as noted as the woman of Endor for his skill in the present, the past, and the future.

“ I have passed the age of man twenty years ; for now over these hoary locks ninety summers have flown, and in that time never has my fame been impeached as an augur ; therefore, sweet maid, give me leave to unfold to you your history, and then you will acknowledge the truth of my doctrine.

L 4

“ If

"If what I say be not right, let my fair fame be then justly brandished with disgrace."

"Sage," replied the Savoyarde, "the events of my life are numerous and difficult to be known; but I'll e'en trust to you to unfold them: First, you must tell me the circumstances that happen at present, and then if right you divine, my future life shall be open for you to disclose."

"Right," replied he; "I desire no better trial; but first, sweet chantress, you must take off your glove, and in the lines of your hand I will read your name."

She obeyed, and presented her hand, on which were several rings.

"Your name, fair musician (still looking in her hand) is la Belle Savoyarde, as lovely a maid as the sun ever shone on; more blooming art thou than the rose, and more delicate than the lily."

"Tell

“ Tell me, old man,” said the Savoyarde, bowing for the compliment he had just paid her, “ if I am beloved by any one, or whether my unpropitious stars have suffered me to live till now without making an interest in the heart of man ?”

“ Far be it from me, fair maid, to say that the beauty of Savoy should not have made an interest in the heart of some noble youth.”

“ Name him then, and let me hear my destiny from your lips.”

“ Patience, blooming maid ; in the school of time I have acquired it ; and from me learn to submit ; but youth, I know, is sanguine, and therefore I will not longer keep you in suspense. Know, then, thou art beloved and adored by a youth of gallant name, and portly wherewithal ; long in secret has he admired thy virtues, but thy heart of steel refuses to admit him as its master ; but from me, fair damsel, learn this, that but with his life will end the love and adoration he bears you. And

L 5

now,

now, dear Eloise, tell me if I speak not truth, and give me the praise due to my sagacity."

"Soothsayer," replied the Savoyarde, angrily, "you know me not; my name is not Eloise, nor do I know the youth of whom you say I am beloved; from nobler ancestors I draw my breath; my haughty soul spurns the plebian blood of Eloise, in comparison of mine, which derives its source from noblesse."

Augustus now found he had made an egregious mistake; and at this instant a figure, in the same dress, passed, playing on her guitar; conviction of its not being Eloise now rushed on his mind, and for some minutes rendered him silent; however recovering from his confusion, "Damsel," said he, "far be it from me to give offence; if perchance I have mistaken you, it is surely no crime; therefore be not angry that your rank should be disputed. From dust we came, and to dust we must return; then certainly none is greater nor less than another, but those who are most amiable, and of that rank is Eloise; and
though

though I preach not up equality, yet poverty or low blood I never despise ; for in me you see one of the most forlorn and poor mortals that ever traversed the terrestrial globe, and therefore I will not offend you by remaining near you longer ; but wishing you in your grandeur all possible happiness, continue my pilgrimage."

It was in vain she endeavoured to detain him ; for here Augustus arose ; and left the angry lady almost in tears with vexation.

In the mean time that the above conversation was carrying on, Eloise arrived. At first she kept close to Mrs. Wilmot, till told by her that a Savoyarde and a sultana were improper companions ; she then left her side, and was surrounded by the figure of Ariel and his brother sylphs, which mustered a large number.

A scene so different to what she had ever before been engaged in, must amuse her ; she

gazed with wonder at the people ; the grotesque figures, and the more grotesque faces, excited her risible faculties, and it was with difficulty she kept from laughing aloud.

All in this bright circle seemed offering up their vows at the shrine of mirth and hilarity.

For some time she was so surprised at the novelty of the characters, that she was rivetted to the middle of the room, till like a floating cork, she was borne away with the crowd.

When the tide of people a little subsided, she took courage and began a turn on her guitar. All were ready to listen to her, and she soon collected a circle around her, till awed by their numbers, she stopt, and retired to a sofa, where she sat down.

Here a great number of masks asked her from whence she came ; but as she only answered them in monosyllables. and did not

seem inclined to enter into conversation with them, they soon left her.

A figure now followed her from room to room; he was simply attired, and carried a basket of flowers; he often approached her, she knew not why; but though very improbable, she had some idea it was Augustus; she felt greatly interested to enter into conversation with him, but her modesty forbid her making the first advances. At this moment he bowed gracefully before her, and taking from his basket a paper which seemed to contain a bouquet, "Fair lily," said he, "thou, like me, droopest on the stalk; but let me present thee thy favourite flower, the rose of Sharon."

She was now more than ever convinced it was Augustus, as he alone, she supposed, knew her predilection for that beautiful flower, as he had once accompanied her to the cottage at Rissone, to look at the roses that bloomed around it in the greatest luxuriance,

riance, and which had all been planted by her hands.

She retired to a corner of the room, to examine her prize, as she had not seen a rose since her arrival in England; and she was just going to throw the paper away, when she saw it was written on, and contained the following lines :

Accept this blushing rose, ashamed to see
Its native beauty so excelled by thee.
Place it (blest station !) near the seat of love,
Where deep fetch'd sighs thy tender bosom move ;
There, on thy whiter skin than lilies fair,
It may thy inmost thoughts and wishes share ;
Extatic joys, dear rose, thy parting wait,
While *dire despair* is my severer fate.

At first she was delighted with these expressive lines, as supposing them from Sir Augustus ; but on more minutely examining them, the writing, though evidently disguised, bore no traits of one dear, one well known hand ;

hand ; yet it was writing not totally unknown to her ; while Augustus, who only waited till she was alone, came up just as she was hurrying them into her pocket.

He made a bow of humility before her, for she always inspired him with reverence.

“ Syren,” said he, “ like the sailors of Ulysses, I must stop my ears from the melody of thy voice, or I shall be lost for ever.”

She bowed in silence.

“ Fair musician, from what country are you ?”

“ I am from Savoy,” said Eloise.

“ Ah ! I thought England gave not birth to such talents as thine ; but, fair Savoyarde, give me leave to tell you your fortune ; 'tis charity to an old man innured to suffering, who bears them though with fortitude, because the stings of conscience molest him not, and though my foot-stool's earth, my
canopy

canopy the skies, yet on the barren earth I lay me down, without remorse for my past life; but, alas! though not by my own fault, poverty stares me in the face, follows me wherever I go, and guards the threshold of the lowly born, where I lay me down to rest; yet I eat not the bread of idleness, and the cravings of hunger I satiate by soothsaying, and therefore let me unfold your history."

Was it sympathy for his pretended sufferings? or was it that her heart whispered her it was Augustus? be it what it will, she burst into tears.

This was a rack of torture to Augustus; and he was almost on the point of discovering himself.

To wound the sensibility of the woman he adored, without having it in his power to speak consolation to her, was misery; yet though on her account he was sorry, on his own he felt something like pleasure at loving

a woman so susceptible, and so tenderly alive to the misfortunes of others.

After a minute's consideration, she recollected the character was a feigned one, and that poverty, misery, and mean birth, were never the inmates of Rawdon-Park; she therefore dried her tears, truly ashamed of her folly and ignorance.

"My woes," replied the fortune-teller, "interest you more than they do me; but sympathy is always acceptable, and the milk of human kindness, in so young a creature as you appear to be, is uncommon; but once more let me entreat you to take off your glove, and in your hand let me read your destiny."

She obeyed, and presented her lily hand; no gems, no bracelets, were crowded on it, but unadorned, and as white as snow.

It

It was the greatest resolution he could keep from saluting it; but he practised forbearance for once with a good grace.

“ By your pretty white hand your name is Eloise.”

She started with surprise, that any one should know she was there, at least, what dress she was in.

The soothsayer went on.

“ The next thing I tell you, is, by whom you are adored.”

“ By no one, I dare say,” replied Eloise, with hesitation.

“ Humility renders beauty more enchanting; but you think too meanly of yourself; for indeed, fair Eloise, you are adored by a youth of noble birth and good repute; cruel, cruel Eloise, but some prior attachment prevents your returning his love; that flinty bosom is as cold as the earth that gave it birth;

birth; 'tis unfeeling as a stone, and drives the youth, that every hour loves you better than the last, to despair; the world to him without Eloise's love is a blank."

"Indeed," said she, trembling extremely, "you are mistaken; I am too insignificant to be thought of by any person of high birth; and though I am proud, my soul aspires not to such as you describe."

"Your beauty and your accomplishments might command the love of princes; but gentle Eloise, are you sure that no happy man in distant climes possesses the heart the youth I mention, but for that barrier, would petition for, and lives but in the hope of obtaining?"

Eloise could not conceive who could be so well informed of her history; but this last question she was resolved to answer; to lay under the imputation of loving some person abroad, was so provoking, as well as untrue, that she could scarcely hear it with patience.

"Sir

“ Sir,” replied she, “ my heart is engaged by no foreign youth ; nor is there any one in either France or Italy (the countries I suppose you allude to) for whom I heaved a sigh of regret on my coming to England.”

“ Then, tell me, has the gallant youth I name any chance of your heart ? relenting in his favour, will you ever, oh charming woman ! return the love of Sir Augustus Castle Fern ?”

“ Sir,” said Eloise, rising with dignity from her seat, “ if you are ambassador from the gentleman you mention, you may tell him, if he has any interrogatories to make, to speak to me himself, and not through the medium of another person endeavour to throw me off my guard, to declare what really are my sentiments ; if, Sir, on the contrary, what you have been saying is from your own inventive brain, you must give me leave to say I think it intrusive, cruel, and impertinent ; and I must beg you to desist, or you will drive me from my seat.”

“ Good

“ Good God !” said the mask, “ have I offended you ?”

“ Not, Sir, in the least ; I only desire to hear no more of such conversation.”

“ Sweetest Eloise,” said he, pressing her hand, “ pronounce my pardon, and I shall be happy.”

“ Where there is no offence given, Sir,” replied she, “ I should suppose no forgiveness need be solicited.”

“ Then, amiable Eloise, take your seat again, and let me enjoy your charming converse.”

“ Certainly, Sir, on the condition I before mentioned.”

“ On any conditions you please to make.”

For some time the masks sat together, conversing on common-place subjects ; Sir Augustus then pointed out to her the different good characters that passed ; when here her excellent remarks were drawn into action,
and

and by them she added charm on charm in the eyes of her unknown admirer.

While they were sitting, the figure, who was in the same dress, and whom he had mistaken for Eloise, came up to them.

“ So, Sir,” said she, “ I see you have discovered your mistake, and have found the lady you were in quest of.”

“ I have, madam, and can only say that I am sorry I have wounded your pride by taking you for one of the most amiable women on earth.”

“ Mighty high flown, Mr. Fortune-Teller; I am sure the lady is vastly obliged to you for thus extolling her.”

“ Not, madam, half as much as she deserves; and I only wish every person to copy her mind as accurately as you have her dress.”

“ I should rather think,” said the lady, with contempt, “ she had copied mine, than I had taken pattern by her’s, as you seem to

in-

insinuate ; but, Sir, I perceive I am interrupting an agreeable tete-a-tete, and therefore will take my departure."

And away she marched in a *pas grave*, to shew her dignity and high consequence.

Augustus, who on her approach had left the sofa, now returned to it ; but no Eloise was there. He went from room to room, and several times passed her without knowing it ; at length, tired with the pursuit, he seated himself in another room, where near him stood a number of gentlemen talking of the different characters, and the pretty faces which were concealed under them.

After some time he heard one of them say :

" Damme, Tom, there is a number of devilish pretty faces, I understand, under the masks to-night ; I hope they will take them off soon, though her Grace says not till supper ;
and

and then instead of eating, I shall feast my eyes with looking at them. 'Tis a horrid bore, I think, that the ladies must mask ; in the first place, one has a chance of conversing or dancing with an ugly woman, as well as a handsome one."

" I hear," answered the gentleman who went by the appellation of Tom, " that the lady who to-night wears the palm of beauty, is from Besborough Castle."

Sir Augustus drew a little closer to them on hearing Eloise mentioned.

" Why, damme, Tom, so I understand ; and I have been endeavouring to find her out, though without effect ; she is devillish cunning for I have spoke to every woman in the room, who is well made and tolerably well dressed, but I cannot find Miss Montblanc among them."

" Oh you have seen her then," replied the other.

" Only

“ Only at church ; where the sharp eyes of Sir Augustus are so watchful, lest she should look at any one but himself, that I have scarcely ventured to turn mine towards her. To be sure she is one of the most divine creatures I ever beheld ; but so grave ; she never even smiles ; there——”

“ Is Sir Augustus here to-night ?” enquired one of them.

“ Oh the devil take him, I believe not, for if he was, we should spy her out directly ; he would be at her elbow, as if he was pinned to her apron string.”

Here was a violent burst of laughter from all the party.

“ No,” continued he, “ Sir Augustus has for once let her out without him. I suppose by that he is on the wane.”

“ I did hear,” replied the first that spoke, “ he was going to be married to her ; but damn it I knew it was improbable that he should make a wife of the woman he kept

for a mistress; and a sweet pretty one she is too. I hate people's cast offs, or I suppose she will be to be had soon on easy terms, for Sir Augustus's love will cool as fast as it heated. I suppose, though she will be in her heroics at first, and quite on a grand pas; she will then come down, and be as suppliant as a lamb."

"Why, Bob," said the man, who still held forth, "you took your *carte blanche* there; what, my boy, was you ever going to light her to the temple of Hymen, and turn Benedict in her service?"

"*'Pan my honour,*" said a voice which Augustus recognised as that puppy Fitzerrington's, "only to oblige my mother, who wished me to make her an offer; but, bless my stars, before the day for our marriage was fixt, I took care to put it off, for *'pan my honour* I was not willing to divide her person and affections with Sir Augustus Castle Fern, therefore I married another lady, and left her to wear the willow, and came over to England, where she soon followed me."

"Choice

“ Choice spirit, your’s Fitzerrington,” said one of them, “ not to choose a pair of horns for your crest.”

A general laugh of admiration was excited by this very wise speech.

“ Coward,” said Sir Augustus, laying hold of the masque, who had so cruelly traduced her, “ no one speaks against Miss Montblanc’s character with impunity in my presence ; her fair fame no villain shall violate ; and though under the disguise you to night wear, you have slandered her and unjustly too ; an action you would have trembled at committing, when without your masks ; but your cruelty can be exceeded only by your cowardice.”

Here Fitzerrington began to make his apologies, testifying his sorrow on the occasion, and trembling with fear, shewed how much he was agitated.

“ As for you, Mr. Fitzerrington,” replied Augustus, “ I only despise your sordid soul one degree more for your cowardice than I did for your defamation; from a paultroon like you I care not what is said, for of your cowardice you know I have had sufficient proof, on a former occasion; and if I wished to challenge you, and punish you as you deserve, you would only make a fool of me, by not meeting me; but this gentleman, of whose personal bravery I have had no test, I shall beg to meet me to-morrow morning, at seven o’clock, wherever he appoints, and with whatever weapons he pleases, and then in the field I will explain my pretensions to justify, with my life, and defend Miss Montblanc.”

The gentleman bowed assent, and said he should be on the heath adjoining Besborough at the appointed time, and then formally giving each other their cards they separated.

Sir

Sir Augustus went in search of his beloved Eloise; the gentleman who was to meet him took his leave of the masquerade; while Fitzerrington slunk off like a coward, and getting into his carriage, ordered it to drive the London road, lest Sir Augustus should repent of his lenity, and challenge him.

Soon after the supper rooms were thrown open, and the company began unmasking; he walked up and down the room, in search of Eloise, and at length found her seated next Captain Bycroft. Jealousy again assailed his heart, and he was just going to discover himself, when he determined to repress it, and still support his character.

My fair readers may have seen Eloise's beauty was of that superior kind, that was sure to make almost every woman her enemy, at least, not her friend; and this was the case with Mrs. Wilmot, who had never been near her the whole night; for her qualifications and virtues were of that superior order, that

although of high birth, the inquiry wherever she went, and the answer it produced, a dependant, denied her that protection and respect she only received from Lady Castle Fern.

Sir Augustus wished to have sat next her, but there was no seat; and seeing a vacant one opposite, he secured it for himself, and then unmasked, but was not discovered by Eloise.

To avoid detection, he had put on a large beard, a pair of mustachios, his face was painted a dingy yellow colour, and his eyebrows were as black as jet.

Eloise fixt her penetrating eyes on him with astonishment, but not as if she knew him.

He saw (while she was unconscious of it) that all eyes were directed towards her, and
her

her beauty seemed to attract universal admiration, while her modest blushes, which were by being stared at, excited, added animation to her lovely face; she looked every where around the room, for the mask with his basket of flowers, which had presented the copy of verses to her, but no where could she discern any thing like him; while Sir Augustus was equally solicitous, and equally unsuccessful in discovering the haughty Savoyarde with whom he had committed such a mistake.

Eloise was pained to see what little notice Lady Elizabeth and Lady Susan Colvil, who were with a large party in the characters of priestesses of the fun, and who with their numerous companions, had been extremely noisy the whole evening, in singing from Elfrida,

“ All hail thy living light, ambrosial day,”

took of her; and had it not been for Captain Rycroft, who was very attentive to her, she would have been entirely forsaken, for in compliment to the mistress of Rawdon-Park, the ladies noticed only whom they did, and it is well known Lady Ducheſſes bow only to riſing ſuns.

After ſupper they formed themſelves into ranks for country dances. Eloife muſt either dance with Captain Rycroft, or elſe have him for a companion in a tete-a-tete. The alternative was an unpleaſant one, and ſhe rather choſe to dance. They ſtood up, and were juſt going to begin, when Auguſtus drew Rycroft aſide, and diſcovered himſelf to him.

He then told him he was engaged in a quarrel with a gentleman (though on what account he forbore to mention) and aſked the favour of him to be his ſecond, and attend him the next morning at ſeven o'clock; but on no account to let Eloife know he was there.

Rycroft

Rycroft promised to comply with this request, after rallying him for some time on his grotesque appearance ; and Sir Augustus now only wished to speak with Eloise, before he went home, to settle some business previous to his meeting his antagonist.

After the first dance was over, Eloise complained of fatigue, and begged to be excused dancing any more ; and she retired to a vacant bench in the next room, where Augustus soon followed her.

“ I must now,” said he, “ with my fair Savoyarde adieu ; for I have a long pilgrimage to perform. Perhaps we may *never* meet again,” continued he, with a deep sigh. He stopt an instant. “ Excuse me, Eloise, but once more I must transgress ; all I ask is forgiveness for my temerity, in saying, perhaps for the last time, that Augustus lives but for you ; his heart adores you alone ; and if ever, Eloise, he sees thee the property of

M 5

another,

another, that instant life becomes insupportable to him.

Tears now trickled down her cheeks, though she knew not for what, except that she felt interested for the fate of the fortune-teller; the pensive manner in which he spoke; the woes he painted, though imaginary, were prefaced by the loved name of Augustus, and made her bend towards him with kindness; and she was just going to assure him that she was not offended with what he had said, when she saw he was gone.

“ Oh,” sighed she, “ that I could but have told him, I was not angry I should be contented; now most likely he will tell Augustus, for he must be employed by him, I forbade his name being mentioned, and that his haughty spirit will never brook; he will be offended with me for ever.”

While she was meditating, Mrs. Wilmot came to tell her the carriage was ready, and
after

after being handed to it by Captain Rycroft, drove to the Castle; and thanking Mrs. Wilmot for her protection, she retired to her room, where she found Mrs. Bridget, and as it was then four o'clock; after she had assisted her to take off her gown, told her she could dispense with her attendance, and bid her retire.

Eloise's pillow was the pillow of meditation, doubt, and conjecture.

Who the stranger could be, was a mystery she could not unravel; the scheme had been premeditated, since he had aimed at speaking to her long before she made her appearance at the masquerade, she was convinced from the few words she gathered from her sister Savoyarde's conversation with the fortune-teller.

His face she never remembered seeing any where; who Sir Augustus could have made his envoy, or whether he really commissioned

M 6

him

him to say what he did, was a secret in the bosom of time, and which she thought it probable it might never disclose.

“ If,” sighed she, “ Augustus *really* loves me, why has he not spoken to me before? is there any thing forbidding in my looks, to prevent his mentioning *that* love I should be so proud of possessing?”

Lost in various and uncertain conjecture, the maze, a large and intricate one in which she reflected, and every moment she got further into it, till at length, lost and bewildered in conjuring up fresh ideas equally futile as the last, she fell into a sound sleep.

CHAP.

C H A P. XII.

MY last chapter was replete with accidents, mistakes, uneasiness, and conjecture ; and if ever these imperfect pages afforded amusement, or interested the reader, they will now wish for one of explanation to unravel the mysteries.

You will first recollect, that when the heart of our hero was canvassed o'er in my Lady Ducheſs's dressing-room, that a masquerade was to be given, to discover whether he really possessed one. This was to be known

known by Eloise's dress being found out before the night by Mrs. Jeffard, their waiting woman, who was *l'intime amie* of Mrs. Bridget; and Lady Elizabeth, on whose sagacity her Grace depended, and who resembled Eloise in height, though I am sorry to say in no one thing else, was to personate her, and discover Sir Augustus Castle Fern's sentiments towards her.

In a week after the invitations had been circulated, Mrs. Jeffard was sent by her fair mistresses from Rawdon Park, to her sister abigail at Besborough Castle, where she gained the wished for information, of what Eloise's dress would be; and was even so minute as to take a bit of the silk of which it was made, lest she should mistake the colour.

On her departure, she said, she should be happy to see Mrs. Bridget the night of the masquerade, to be a spectator of the fun, as she termed it. This was a pleasure she little expected, and it was a fortunate circumstance
that

that our heroine's dress was finished, for not a thing could she think of but the invitation, after she received it.

Mrs. Jeffard begged her not to mention it to any one, lest she should have the whole fraternity of waiting women on her back, for not inviting them likewise. This Mrs. Bridget, who valued the favour of my Lady Duchess's abigail, as much as her Grace's acquaintance valued her's, readily complied with; and Mrs. Jeffard then took her departure, in her lady's post-chaise, first ordering it to Derby, to purchase the materials for Lady Elizabeth's apparel.

When the evening arrived, Lady Elizabeth put on her Savoyarde dress; and her arms, which were to be shewn at the top of her gloves, to imitate the natural colour of Eloise's, were as white as pearl powder and cosmetics could make them.

Mrs.

Mrs. Jeffard, like a centinel, was placed at the door to which the carriages drew up ; and no sooner did she see the post-chaise, with the flaming hand, and servants in black liveries, than she summoned her lady, who waited at some little distance ; and as Sir Augustus passed, took notice of every part of his dress. She then, unseen by him, returned to the room, and mingled with the motley throng.

A dress like her sister's, of a priestess of the sun, had been prepared for her, to put on before she unmasked.

After meeting with the severe disappointment she did, from the words of Sir Augustus, concerning Eloise, she retired to her dressing-room in tears, where she was quite in a rage with vexation, till Mrs. Jeffard, who was her confidante, entreated her not to mind none such as him ; for that a lady of such beauty and rank as *her* lady, might, if she pleased, have the first prince in the kingdom. This timely consolation appeased her tears,
and

and after throwing aside her Savoyarde dress, and habiting herself as a priestess, she returned to her sister and her companions. The anger and resentment she bore Sir Augustus, she passively vented on Eloise, by taking no notice of her at supper.

We must now enter into the explanation of the figure with a basket of flowers, who followed our heroine from room to room.

The Duchess of Rawdon, as I before observed, sent tickets to all her friends within many miles ; and to several gentlemen she gave them to circulate to their acquaintance ; one of whom resided in the village of which Mr. Wharton was the rector, and who offered him one. The words he had used the Sunday before in his sermon, that “ the life of man is spent in a continual warfare between his reason and his appetities,” never more strongly occurred to him than when he accepted the ticket. He had heard of the entertainment, and likewise that Eloise was to
be

be there, in a letter he had received from Sir Augustus Castle Fern. His inclination prompted him to do what his sounder judgment condemned; and he endeavoured to convince himself, that where no harm is done to any one, it was not an offence that would be registered against his moral character, and he likewise brought to himself, as a palliation, the reflection that he should appear with less *eclat* than any one that composed the court of folly and mirth that evening. And as he favoured the old adage of example being stronger than precept, he resolved that no one should have him as a precedent for doing wrong; he therefore determined not to take off his mask, but to leave the masquerade as soon as he had presented the copy of verses to the fair, the much loved Eloise, and this resolution he strictly adhered to; therefore it was that Eloise's researches after him, when the company unmasked, were fruitless.

I do not doubt that you likewise think it extraordinary that Fitzerrington, to whom
the

the amiable Eloise had never given offence, should with the rest defame her. His motives were these : He thought her of the same turn of mind with his other female acquaintance, who, when they receive an offer, blazon it forth, as glorying in adding triumph on triumph ; he therefore supposed most of his friends to be already acquainted with it, and to surmount the ridiculous figure he conceived a man to stand in when he receives a refusal of that kind, he gave it the cruel turn you are already acquainted with ; and he it was who was the first propagator of a tale so replete with villany. But we must now return to our hero, whom we left rather in a critical situation. After parting from his adored Eloise, he got into his post-chaise, and drove to the cottage, when, undressing himself, and taking off the paint from his cheeks and eye-brows, behold him once more Sir Augustus Castle Fern, such as he always was, young, amiable, and handsome. He then returned to Besborough, and through a private door, of which Anthony always kept the key, he

he retired to his study, unseen by Mrs. Bridget, who was the only person then up in the Castle. It being then four o'clock, he was resolved not to go to bed; but he sat down and wrote a letter to his mother, and another to Eloise, which were to be given to them by his groom, in case he received a mortal wound. He likewise wrote a paper, in which he disposed of his fortune, for he was now of age. When he had settled these preliminaries, he looked at his watch; it wanted a quarter to six, and finding he had more than an hour before he was to meet his antagonist, he resolved to take, possibly, a last look at the room that enclosed his adored Eloise. Softly he crept up stairs into the gallery which led to her room. Here the picture of his beloved sister glanced his eyes, and he stooped to look at it. "Adieu thou dear resemblance of a long mourned, long regretted sister; your azure eyes, so soft and so gentle, seem to speak comfort and peace to my soul. Perhaps e'er this day is spent, my kindred spirit will join thine in the realms of eternity."

Here

Here a shower of tears relieved his oppressed bosom, for Sir Augustus thought it not beneath a man to weep. They were not the tears of cowardice ; no, so much did he wish to meet his antagonist, that he would have encountered the greatest dangers, rather than not vindicate the fair character of Eloise. His tears were now on the reflection, that he might never again behold her more. " Cruel thought," said he, as he approached nearer her chamber ; but then what glory will be attached to my name, when ages hence it shall be known that Augustus Castle Fern drew his last breath in defence of the virgin honour and fame of so perfect a mortal as Eloise Montblanc." These noble sentiments animated him with spirits, and made his heart light.

The door of her chamber was ajar ; this was too great a temptation to be resisted. Was there any harm in looking at his mistress once before he risked his life in her defence ? " Surely not," said he, " since I know

know my thoughts are as pure as her that inspired them." He listened, all was hushed in the bosom of silence and sleep. He took off his slippers, and scarcely ventured to breathe, lest he should awake her; and he entered the room. The bottom curtains of the bed were open; here then he stood gazing at her for some time. "Oh matchless purity! if the dastardly wretch with whom I am to engage, could see thee wrapt in the bosom of sleep, of composure, would he have traduced thy spotless character? would he, if he saw the smile that now beams on thy lovely countenance, such as angels might wear, the truest emblem of an innocent and guileless conscience, dared he say thou wert the mistress of any man? That face, that speaks for itself, is an introduction to a mind as lovely and as perfect as yours; if you are not shielded from the serpent tongue of slander, who can be? Your circumspection, so rarely to be met with in women so young, one would suppose, like a divine Ægis, guard you from detraction, and insure your virtues respect."

The

The clock now struck six, and warned him it was time to leave her. Her snow white hand lay on the counterpane ; he approached the side of the bed, and finding her fast asleep, gently raised and pressed it to his lips. " This fair hand," said he, " if I return unwounded from the duel, I shall petition for, and I hope possess ; then indeed I shall be blest above my fellow creatures. If, on the contrary, I die, it will be in the glorious cause of virtue, and *that* will insure to my memory fame that even time cannot do away ; and if my last petition is heard, it will be for the health and happiness of the gentle, amiable, and adored Eloise."

He pressed her soft hand to his bosom ; again kissed it, and dropping on it the tear of love and affection, he tore himself from her, and hurried down stairs, fearing any longer to trust himself in the same atmosphere she breathed in.

He next chose his pistols, and put them into his case ; and soon after Rycroft came ;
he

he then summoned his groom, and the horses being ready, they set off full speed for Besborough heath.

The morning was just breaking with orient streaks of red, after a shower of rain; the leaves were still glittering with wet, and as Sir Augustus was admiring the serenity of the scene, the words of his favourite elegant poet occurred to him:

“ The sparkling leaves a fresher green display,

“ And glittering as they tremble, cheer the day.”

The scene was little in unison with his feelings, but in the contemplation of it he found them harmonised, and for a few minutes keen recollection seemed suspended till the brown extensive heath presented itself before him, and he recollected the duel.

END OF VOL. II.

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